“THE THIRST, AND THE SUN, AND THE BLEEDING”: ḤUSAYN AS A PASSIBLE LIMINAL FIGURE IN PRO-ʿALID HAGIOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to contribute a bridge in theological dialogue between Islam and Christianity. It specifically addresses the ontology of God, focusing on one fundamental concept therein. Divine passibility, God’s ability to change, has long been contested. Dating back millennia, and largely codified in Aristotelian thought, the notion that God is impervious to change (impassible) was in ascendency for centuries. Yet the horrors of the twentieth century have called into question the notion of an utterly and solely transcendent deity—where is God in a suffering world? This dissertation focuses on two figures born thirteen centuries apart. Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926) posed a powerful challenge to divine impassibility in his 1972 *The Crucified God*. Most strains of Islam historically have insisted on divine impassibility, but the narrative of Muḥammad’s grandson Ḥusayn (626-680) suggests otherwise. His martyrdom on the plains of Karbalāʾ, as chronicled by his later devotees, is an occasion for grief that echoes throughout the cosmos and affects even God. Using the heuristic concepts referred to here as, “theology from below,” a “fuser of horizons,” a “liminal hero,” and “narrative theology,” this dissertation shows that there is in Islam a near correlate to Moltmann’s assertion that God is intimately involved in human experience. After establishing these theological concepts and providing an overview of Moltmann’s thesis, it turns to a close reading of three texts from the late Abbasid era (roughly 750-1258) from the genre known as *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* (Arabic: “slaying of Ḥusayn;” plural: *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*) approached through the hermeneutical lens of divine passibility. It concludes with an assessment of the compatibility between these two understandings of God’s relationship

to passion. God, it would seem in the final reading, is affected, and this has great sociological implications—this is the God of the oppressed, the downtrodden, and the wounded.

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Chapter I: Posing the Question

The "love of God" of liberal theology since Schleiermacher is nothing but the "soprano" of these happy people. They did not have the ears to hear the bass which is the pain of God sounding out of the depths.

Kazō Kitamori[1]

Dissertation Overview

Structure

This dissertation addresses the notion of divine change in religious discourses within Christianity and Islam. Passibility, which will be defined below, is theologically contentious because it seems to strip God of transcendent sovereignty. The seven chapters will address this issue in five contours. After laying out the general outline of the dissertation in this introductory chapter, I will establish a hermeneutical method for reading texts with an eye toward passibility. I will then present a case for divine passibility using the work of a contemporary Christian theologian. Next, I will interrogate a set of classical Islamic texts using the method I have established. Finally, I will assess the degree to which there is what Miroslav Volf calls "sufficient similarity" between these two traditions in terms of passibility and the degree to which this similarity can be helpful in advancing inter-theological dialogue.[2]

Premise

Christians involved in dialogue with Islam have long found it expedient to focus on points of contact between the two traditions.[3] Among other points of commonality, they point to

[1] Kazō Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press 1965), 24.
[2] Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Theological Response* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 89.
[3] For two examples separated by time and scope, see the writings of John of Damascus (c. 675-749) and Miroslav Volf (b. 1956).

the doctrine of God put forth by both Christian Scholastics and Muslim interpreters of Aristotle. This God is simply *beyond*—beyond experience, beyond feeling, beyond time, beyond change, and certainly beyond suffering and vulnerability. Yet this doctrine, divine impassibility, cannot be taken for granted by Christian (or Jewish) theologians living in a world in the wake of Auschwitz and Hiroshima. For many such theologians, this God is conceived as standing and feeling with the most marginalized of people.[4] If the classical assertion is true that Jews, Christians, and Muslims are oriented toward the same God, the "God of Abraham" (to overly simplify the concept), then their common deity must have certain agreed-upon attributes. If strains of Christianity and Judaism insist that God loves, hurts, and cares—in other words, is passible—then they must either encounter an Islam that agrees on this fundamental point or concede that they know a different deity than the Islamic Godhead—this even involves the possibility of dismissing the Islamic God as no god at all. This dissertation shows that just as strains of Christianity and Judaism believe God to be passible, Islam also has within it traditions that can be interpreted to conceive of God in such a manner. More specifically, this dissertation demonstrates the ways in which nascent Twelver Shīʿa Islamic narrative sources—especially the genre of martyrology known as *maqtal al-Ḥusayn*—also envision a God who stands and falls with the oppressed.[5] In doing so, it offers a parallel to Jürgen Moltmann's challenge to the classical Christian doctrine of divine impassibility.

The idea of divine passibility has received much attention in Jewish and Christian theological discourse during the past several decades. Twentieth-century Jewish and Christian

[4] This is especially true for subscribers to liberation theology, a movement with which Jürgen Moltmann is largely associated.

[5] Twelver Shīʿism (also known as Imāmiyyah) is the dominant Shīʿite branch, holding that the twelfth Imam, Ḥujjat Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan al-Mahdī, is living in occultation and will emerge alongside Jesus (ʿĪsā) in the last days to restore justice to the earth.

theology faced an existential crisis as it witnessed unparalleled global suffering—nearly 200 million people died as the result of war, genocide, and preventable famine. The traditional metaphysics of an impassible God no longer satisfied many theologians.[6] In Christianity, "until the end of the 1800s, the 'orthodox' and mainstream position was that God is impassible. At around about the turn of the twentieth century, there was an almost complete passibilist revolution."[7] While Anastasia Scrutton's point here might be hasty, especially as important developments in the discourse of divine passibility occurred in the wake of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, it stands—there has been a marked shift in the attitudes of many Jews and Christians regarding the concept of passibility especially since the unfolding of twentieth century calamities. "Theology from below" undertook to formulate a doctrine of God consistent with human experience of God's activity in the world, especially a world marred by twentieth century horrors. Karl Rahner helped to develop the key insight that God is the same in God's relationship to creation as God is within the inner divine life. The Reformers' dualistic distinction between the experienced *Deus revelatus* and the hidden *Deus absconditus* collapsed into Karl Barth's dialectic between the two.[8] If the faithful and the innocent suffer, then their deity cannot be unfeeling—either in compassion toward victims or in God's internal self-relation. Paul of Tarsus's kenotic godhead is not penultimate to some apocalyptic consummation and is no docetic figment. God's self-giving pathos is real and eternal to these thinkers.

Jürgen Moltmann's *theologia crucis* (theology of the Cross), historical impetus and theological commitment may make him appear on the surface to be a much less likely interlocutor for Islam than others who account for God's passibility. The first section of the

[6] See, for example, Charles Hartshorne's 1948 *The Divine Relativity* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

[7] Anastasia Scrutton, *Thinking Through Feeling: God, Emotion and Passibility* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 866.

[8] Cf. Daniel Howard-Snyder and Adam Green, "Hiddenness of God" *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta (2016): https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/divine-hiddenness/.

dissertation will include a description of Moltmann's theology of the cross as derived from his Barthian reading of Paul. In it I discuss Moltmann's *theologia crucis* and its indebtedness to Martin Luther (through Martin Kähler, Franz Rosenzweig, and Ernst Käsemann), G.W.F. Hegel (through Ernst Bloch, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer), and death of God theology (through Elie Wiesel, Thomas J.J. Altizer, and Paul Tillich). Then, building on this discussion, I lay out the commitments and assumptions that Moltmann brings to reflections on the cross and the Godhead, bringing in Richard Bauckham and other Moltmann scholars to address two fundamental questions. First, is Moltmann's theology capable of affirming (and willing to concede) that God expresses God's self beyond the story of Jesus Christ? Second, to what extent does Moltmann distinguish between Christ's passion, generic theopassianism, and the anti-Chalcedonian concept of patripassianism? With Origen, Moltmann would agree, *ipse pater non est impassibilis*, "the Father himself is not impassible," but Moltmann's most original contribution to the theology of passibility is his *differentiation* of the agony suffered by the Father and the Son. Moltmann's theology is a direct challenge to the Council of Chalcedon and to Cyril's contention that God "suffered impassibly." This reframing resolves the paradox of a hypostatic disunion in passible moments such as incarnation and crucifixion. It also answers the theodical question of God's apparent indifference to human suffering. Finally, paralleling Karl Rahner's *Grundaxiom*, it resolves the apparent division between God in relationship to creation and God in God's inner life: "The theology of the cross must be the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Trinity must be the theology of the cross."[9] Borrowing from Werner Elert, Moltmann names Cyril of Alexandria as representing "the 'error' which the whole of early

[9] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, trans. R. Wilson and J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1974), 241.

Christian theology demonstrates at this point."[10] Rather, for Moltmann, pathos saturates the hypostatic union, and Christ's suffering causes the First Person to suffer the loss of a Son. In *The Crucified God* Moltmann describes divine passibility in all-encompassing terms.[11]

The question remains whether there is room in Islam to talk about the pathos of God, a God whose immanence is never sacrificed on the altar of transcendence. If not, can there be any real analogue in Moltmann to an Islamic theology that recognizes both God's immanent activity within human drama and God's utter unsurpassability? Does humanity have to saturate Islam's God for that God to be the same as Moltmann's? Moltmann hastily (if frequently) dismisses Islam along with Anselm, Aquinas, Maimonides, and Spinoza as having a philosopher's God, a God who is "pure will." This dissertation will contend that the narrative dimensions of one Islamic theological paradigm are not reducible to Anselm's *aliquid quod maius non cogitari potest* ("that than which nothing greater can be conceived"). In the martyrologies of Ḥusayn's death at Karbalāʾ I argue that we find a non-systematized God, one who exists in the perpetual dialectic between immanence and transcendence, between defeat and victory. The immanent in particular comes to the fore.

Karbalāʾ as an Historical Event

Al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (c. 628-680)[12] was the Prophet Muḥammad's grandson through his daughter Fāṭima and his first cousin ʿAlī. Ḥusayn was the heir to two disputes regarding the rightful leadership of the nascent Islamic community. At Muḥammad's death the

[10] Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 229.

[11] See especially the book's eponymous sixth chapter.

[12] All dates not otherwise specified refer to the Common Era.

consensus of the early Muslim leadership was that authority should pass to the Prophet's uncle and father-in-law Abū Bakr. A few preferred Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī, with whom the Prophet had been raised. The inheritors of these dissenters' point of view came to be called the Partisans of ʿAlī; their Arabic name gives us the word Shīʿite. ʿAlī eventually came to head the community as the last of the four so-called Rightly Guided Caliphs (*rāshidūn*), but with his death came another dispute. Again, the question was whether succession should be political or hereditary. Advocates of the former supported Muʿāwiya I, who began the Umayyad dynasty. Those who favored Muḥammad's bloodline believed ʿAlī's eldest son Ḥasan to be the divinely appointed leader. Ḥasan capitulated to Muʿāwiya in order to avoid bloodshed, but there seems to have been a tacit agreement that at Muʿāwiya's death the leadership would return to the Prophet's household.[13] Ḥasan predeceased Muʿāwiya, leaving his younger brother Ḥusayn as the supposed successor, but on his deathbed Muʿāwiya transferred power to his son Yazīd. Unlike his older brother, Ḥusayn was not content to trade deference for peace, and in the 61st year of the Islamic calendar Ḥusayn and a handful of his companions met Yazīd's forces on the plains of Karbalāʾ on the banks of the Euphrates River in Iraq. The outcome of the "battle" was a foregone conclusion—according to traditional sources of this narrative Ḥusayn's band of a hundred-odd men, women, and children was several orders of magnitude smaller than Yazīd's army.[14] Virtually all who fought with Ḥusayn died in a massacre which has thence served as the definitive event for Shīʿite piety. From relatively soon after the battle Ḥusayn's partisans have commemorated his martyrdom through a series of rituals, legends, and elegies which have grown increasingly elaborate through the centuries. This veneration and the narrative tradition and

[13] Cf. Wilferd Madelung, "Ḥosayn b. ʿAli i. Life and Significance in Shiʿism," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (2004): http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hosayn-b-ali-i.

[14] Cf. Abū Mikhnaf (d. 773), *Kitāb Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, trans. Hamid Mavani for the Shia Ithansheri Community of Middlesex: http://www.sicm.org.uk/knowledge/Kitab%20Maqtal%20al-Ḥusayn.pdf, 90.

beliefs whence it emerges have implications for an Islamic doctrine of God and may pose one of Islam's strongest challenges to the normative assumption of divine impassibility. Here it is helpful to understand the Islamic history that led up to Ḥusayn's passion and, ultimately, the Sunnī-Shīʿī split.

History vs. Memory

Little can be known for certain about the historical battle at Karbalāʾ. There is a preponderance of evidence that it did take place and pitted Umayyads against a group of defiant ʿAlids.[15] The Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn ʻAbī Ṭālib died there and Ḥusayn's son ʿAlī did not. As for the duration of the battle, while hagiographers would come to describe a protracted epic of monumental consequence, this may not reflect its "true" history. The oldest account of the battle comes from Ẓāhir ibn Qays, who allegedly took part in the clash. He claims that the ʿAlids scattered in fright and were killed in "the time it would take to milk a ewe."[16] Even early *maqātil*—martyrologies—do not describe Karbalāʾ as a battle as much as a series of small skirmishes and duels with more dialogue than fighting, not an ultimate all-out showdown between two military forces.[17] Traditional accounts put the numbers at around 100 Ḥusaynids (typically the sacred number 72 is listed) while Yazid's Umayyad army consists of tens or hundreds of thousands of troops, including tens of thousands of cavalry, but given the logistics and conditions of the time this seems unlikely.[18]

[15] Cf. Ernst Honigmann, "Karbalāʾ," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. ed. P. Bearman *et. al*. (2014): http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3928.

[16] Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* (The Hague: Mouton Press, 1978), 137.

[17] Cf. Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 142.

[18] Unsurprisingly, the size of Ibn Saʿd's force grew with the passage of time and the development of Twelver Shīʿism. While for Abū Mikhnaf Ḥurr's Kūfan cavalry numbered a modest 1,000, by the late Abbasid period that number had increased many times over. Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 90.

Of concern here, though, is not the Karbalāʾ of history but the confrontation Twelvers came to *remember*. Following Thomas Sizgorich, Antoine Borrut uses the term *primordial past* to describe Karbalāʾs place in Shīʿī formation and development. This is a key heuristic for understanding the development of the *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*.[19] The Ḥusayn material is based largely on materials preserved by Abū Mikhnaf whose *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* has been explored above. Abū Mikhnaf's sectarian identity will be discussed later in this chapter. The reconstruction of the Karbalāʾ drama, however, represents an attempt to synthesize early memories of the later writers and sometimes clouded memories of those closer to the events, blending history with hagiography without pretending to either historical accuracy or theological normativity.

In this context, three moments in this primordial past that involve the transfer of power display themes that reoccur in many places in Islamic history. These moments are the succession crises of 632, 656, and 661/680, the memories of each having played a formative role in the Sunnī-Shīʿī split. The first of these, the succession struggle in the wake of the Prophet's death, is a paradigm that would once more play out in the conflict between Ḥusayn and Yazīd.

Succession Crisis of 632

There are many factors that describe the intra-communal conflicts that followed the Prophet's death in 632. A particular animosity in the Prophet's household may be one of them. The two most prominent women in Muḥammad's life after the death of Khadīja were his favorite wife, ʿĀʾisha, and his longest-living child, Fāṭima. Because Fāṭima had been born to Muḥammad's first wife Khadīja and because ʿĀʾisha was a young child when she was betrothed

[19]The material I will present in Chapter IV, as I will suggest later in this introduction, is therefore not a historical account as one is understood today, but rather the collective memory in the minds of extant Muslim communities.

to Muḥammad, Fāṭima was roughly nine years older than her stepmother. Muḥammad's long-term lineage passes solely through Fāṭima's union with ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Tensions between the two women gradually increased, and this had implications for the proximate split within the community and ultimately for the crystallization of Shīʿīsm. According to Muslim tradition, ʿĀʾisha waged war on ʿAlī during his caliphate (656-61) following the latter's pardoning of his predecessor's killers.[20] Enmity between them dated back at least to a scandal in which ʿĀʾisha rode a camel alone with another man, prompting ʿAlī to advise Muḥammad to divorce her rather than risk being labeled a cuckold. When ʿĀʾisha was wounded at the Battle of the Camel (so-named because of her steed during the confrontation), ʿAlī offered clemency and ʿĀʾisha withdrew to Medina to regroup, whence other challenges to ʿAlī's position would emerge. Twelver tradition (in fact, "the majority" of recounters) also asserts that ʿĀʾisha's father's hand-picked successor, ʿUmar, had earlier mortally wounded a pregnant Fāṭima.[21] This view is embodied in a number of different narratives; popular ones suggests that ʿUmar caused her miscarriage by kicking her or that her injury resulted from ʿUmar's forces slamming her between a door and a wall while trying to secure ʿAlī's fealty.[22] Regardless of whether the history is embellished, the memory of the rivalry between Fāṭima and ʿĀʾisha is paradigmatic of the gradual divergence of Sunnism and Shīʿism. This memory is coupled with discourse about the identity of Muḥammad's legitimate successor.

[20] An example of a recent discussion that highlights the importance of *ḥadīth* and early historical narratives in the Sunnī and Shīʿī collective memory of this event is "The Battle of Jamal: Understanding Imam Ali's Stance with the Leaders who Opposed Him," at the Al-Mahdi Institute: https://www.almahdi.edu/the-battle-of-jamal-understanding-imam-alis-stance-with-the-leaders-who-opposed-him/. Cf. Denise A. Spellberg, "The Politics of Praise: Depictions of Khadija, Fatima, and ʿA'isha in Ninth-Century Muslim Sources," *Literature East and West* 26 (1990): 130–148.

[21] Laura Veccia Vaglieri, "Fāṭima," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et. al. (2014): http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0217.

[22] Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 44. By tradition ʿAlī and his companions did swear fealty to Abū Bakr after Fāṭima's death.

Supporters of ʿAlī's legitimacy use a variety of memories to justify their position. ʿAlī was married to Muḥammad's favorite daughter Fāṭima and through her gave the Prophet the only two grandchildren through whom his bloodline would eventually be passed through the centuries: Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. In one well-attested narrative (affirmed as sound by Sunnīs and Shīʿīs alike, though interpreted differently) Muḥammad once shrouded himself, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn under his cloak (*kisāʾ*) and declared, *innamā yurīd allāh liyudhhib ʿankum ar-rijs ahl al-bayt wa-yuṭahhirakum taṭhīran* ("O that God wants to remove the impurity from you, people of the House [of the Prophet], and purify you with a thorough purification.")[23] Another narration accepted but interpreted differently by both groups took place at a pond (*ghadīr*) called Khumm. Less than three months before his death the Prophet addressed a group (by legend numbering in the tens or hundreds of thousands) and declared that over whomsoever Muḥammad was master, ʿAlī was to be master.

Yet another tradition cited by ʿAlī's partisans is remembered differently by contemporary Sunnīs and Shīʿīs. The Prophet once declared that he was leaving behind for his people two weighty things by which they might continue to be guided. The first is the Qurʾān. The second is a matter of dispute: Sunnīs claim that it is the example (*sunna*) of the Prophet, while Shīʿīs contend that Muḥammad actually said "my household" (*ahl baytī*).[24] As ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn shared blood with the Prophet—though the first only tangentially—they can be said to

[23] By virtue of this and a number of other events, Shīʿites have emphasized the unique qualification that the Prophet's family has to lead the Muslim community. "A daily Muslim prayer echoes the tradition of al-Kisāʾ: 'O God, bless Muhammad and the people of the House of Muhammad, as you have blessed Abraham and the people of the House of Abraham among all beings.'" Mahmoud Ayoub, "The Excellences of the Imam Ḥusayn in Sunni Ḥadīth Tradition," *Papers from the Imam Ḥusayn Conference, London, July 1984* (London: Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1986), 4.

[24] For Twelver Shīʿites (so-called because of their belief that a series of twelve Imams succeeded Muḥammad before the twelfth, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, went into occultation, where he will remain until the end of the world), this proclamation clearly means that the Prophet's descendants pass along his divine light and are as instructive for the community as is the Qurʾān itself. By tradition, therefore, there are fourteen "infallibles" who are free from error: the five who were jointly under Muḥammad's cloak and the nine patrilineal Imams who followed Ḥusayn.

have inherited Muḥammad's legacy and to be the most appropriate vicegerents for the *umma*. For five brief and tumultuous years, one of them—ʿAlī—did lead the community.

Succession Crisis of 656

Forty-six years after the *Hijra*, a mob of rebels murdered the third of four successors to leadership of Muḥammad's community, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān. The insurgents were said to have been led by a certain 'Abd Allāh ibn Sabāʾ al-Ḥimyarī. Ibn Sabāʾ is alleged to have been a Jewish convert whose followers were pro-ʿAlid partisans. Shīʿites have come to reject the historicity of Ibn Sabāʾ, as that would tarnish the ʿAlid movement by associating it with Judaism.[25] ʿAlī, whose tendency toward arbitration would later cost him his life, tried to persuade the besieging Sabaʾiyya (followers of Ibn Sabāʾ) to grant 'Uthman drinking water while barricaded in his house.[26] ʿAlī tried to act as mediator between the rebels and the Caliph and posted his sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn to defend any attempt to breach the gate. Still, though he wanted a peaceful resolution to the affair, he strongly opposed 'Uthman's secretary Marwan and eventually departed. The Sabaʾiyya stormed the premises and killed 'Uthman while he was reciting the very Qurʾān which he had codified. As remembered by the Umayyads in later decades, this event belonged to the primordial past, and they did not soon forget ʿAlī's absence, nor did they forgive ʿAlī's failure to execute 'Uthman's murderers. Though ʿAlī was installed as the next caliph, 'Uthman's death sparked a second major succession crisis.

[25] Many modern scholars also believe Ibn Sabāʾ's legend to be the invention of the Umayyads, though some affirm the veracity of the Sunnī claim that Ibn Sabāʾ did exist. Madelung, "Ḥosayn," 2.

[26] I.K. Poonawala, "ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭāleb I. Life," *Encyclopædia Iranica vol. I, fasc. 8* (New York: The Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 2004): https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ali-b-abi-taleb. Abū Mikhnaf reports that the refusal of the ʿAlid invaders to assuage ʿUthmān's thirst prompted Ibn Ziyad to write in the days leading up to the battle of Karbalāʾ, "They should not be allowed ever to taste a drop of it, as was done with the righteous, pious and oppressed caliph, 'Uthman b. ʿAffan." Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 110.

Rebellion and challenges to central authority were not new to the young community. Immediately after the Prophet's death a number of Muslim converts refused to swear fealty to Muḥammad's successor, Abū Bakr, arguing that their oaths of allegiance were only binding during the Prophet's lifetime. Abū Bakr's two year caliphate was marked by a series of Wars of Apostasy (*ḥurūb al-ridda*). The central government ended up defeating the rebels, but when Abū Bakr died, another succession crisis took place. Many had an affinity for ʿAlī, who grew up in the same house as his orphaned cousin Muḥammad and was known for his piety, loyalty, and military prowess.[27] They felt that, while he might have been too young to succeed the Prophet immediately, by the time of Abū Bakr's death ʿAlī would be the obvious choice to lead the community. There was a developing rift within the Prophet's household which complicated the transfer of station. When Abū Bakr (ʿĀʾisha's father) died, he designated the demonstrative ʿUmar ibn al-Khattāb as his successor. ʿAlī's partisans (*shīʿa*) resented this passing over, but ʿAlī pledged allegiance to ʿUmar during the latter's ten-year tenure. This did not decrease the enthusiasm for ʿAlī's caliphate, and after one more snubbing in favor of ʿUthmān, ʿAlī was finally selected as caliph of the Muslim community. His failure to prosecute those responsible for ʿUthmān's murder infuriated ʿĀʾisha, who initiated the first Islamic civil war (*fitna*) against ʿAlī. The rift between ʿĀʾisha and ʿAlī/Fāṭima would play out in the paradigm of the Sunnī-Shīʿī split, a split often imagined to have been catalyzed by this era of the primordial past.

Succession Crises of 661 and 680

ʿAlī's assassination prompted yet another leadership dispute. Many assumed that ʿAlī's eldest son, Ḥasan, would succeed his father. However, a deft politician and soldier named

[27] Poonawala; Najam Haider, *Shīʿism: An Introduction* (2014: Cambridge University Press, New York), 58.

Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Ṣufyān had designs on the caliphate. While he was a third cousin once removed to both Muḥammad and ʿAlī (all were descendants of ʻAbd Manāf ibn Quṣai), he was a closer relative of ʻUthman. Both Muʿāwiya and ʻUthman were paternal descendants of the Umayyad namesake, Umayya ibn ʿAbd Shams. Muʿāwiya had long despised ʿAlī and attempted to avenge ʻUthman's death—specifically ʿAlī's failure to punish ʻUthman's killers. Muʿāwiya levied an army and fought ʿAlī at Ṣiffīn in 657. When ʿAlī accepted arbitration during a battle he was winning, a faction of his own army that came to be known by their detractors as the Khawārij (outsiders) slew him for engaging in diplomacy rather than letting God determine the outcome of the battle. The death of ʿAlī created a power vacuum that Muʿāwiya immediately inhabited. Ḥasan, considered by many to be the rightful successor to his father, abdicated in an effort to prevent further Muslim civil war—with the common understanding that Ḥasan would succeed Muʿāwiya at the latter's death. Muʿāwiya outlived Ḥasan, leaving Ḥusayn as the sole remaining son of ʿAlī and Fāṭima.

Whether it was a matter of bellicosity or a piety-inspired sense of justice, Ḥusayn understood himself to be Muʿāwiya's rightful heir. Ḥusayn, in Mecca, received countless letters from the people of Kūfa (which had been the capital under ʿAlī) to travel to that city and lead the Muslim community. However, Muʿāwiya had instead bequeathed his office to his son Yazīd who attempted to secure from Ḥusayn an oath of fealty. Refusing to pledge allegiance to an illegitimate (and in the collective Shīʿī memory impious) ruler, Ḥusayn steeled himself for a confrontation. According to his hagiographers, Ḥusayn did not want the holy city to be profaned by bloodshed, so he and a band of followers set out for Kūfa. Yazīd's forces, under the command of ʿUmar ibn Saʿd, eventually cornered Ḥusayn's camp outside the town of Karbalāʾ on the arid bank of the Euphrates, about 50 miles northwest of Kūfa. The two sides could not negotiate a

peaceful resolution, and the Umayyads concluded that "this matter cannot be resolved except by violence."[28] During the standoff there was notable sectarian fluidity between the partisans of each claimant to the caliphate; Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn al-Bajli, the marksman Abū Shaʿtha, and most notably the general al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Tamīmī switched to the ʿAlid side while Shimr ibn Dhi-l Jawshan (who fought for ʿAlī at the battle of Ṣiffīn) did the opposite.[29] On the tenth day of deadlock with the landlocked Ḥusaynids (Ibn Saʿd had cut them off from the Euphrates), battle broke out and the Prophet's grandson was killed.[30] Those who eventually unified over collective memory of this singularity would outlast other proto-Shīʿite moments that resisted the quickly expanding Umayyad empire. Especially the *Ithna-ʿAshariyya* (Twelver Shīʿites) would produce elaborate devotional poems, elegies, rituals, ceremonies, plays, and hagiographies to remember what they considered the ultimate injustice of the Islamic age. *Maqātil al-Ḥusayn* are among the most poignant of these profoundly emotional expressions of solidarity with the martyred Imam. The collective memory of the battle and the events leading up to it will be covered in more detail in Chapter IV. While the Khawārij might claim that victory on the battlefield is a marker of divine favor, the *maqātil* clearly claim the opposite—just as Ḥusayn's father ʿAlī remains righteous despite his arbitration at Siffin, so does the son remain righteous despite his pleas for peace and his ultimate defeat on the plains of Karbalāʾ. However, the conception of the divine that emerges from the *maqātil* is not the only, or even dominant, one in Islamic thought historically. Another conception of the divine is one that can be traced back to the influence of Aristotle on Islamic thought. Aristotelian notions also influenced Christian thought on

[28] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 32.

[29] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 108; Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 92, 158.

[30] The fighting is said to have taken place on the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram in the Islamic year 61 (October 10, 680 CE). Antoine Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ: The Construction of an Early Islamic Site of Memory," in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, no. 42 (2015), 249.

conceptions of God. In order to understand this major factor in how beliefs about God developed in some Christian and Islamic discourses, we next turn to some of Aristotle's writings on God and how they have been interpreted. This has direct implications for the doctrine of divine suffering: in the pains of the righteous Ḥusayn we glimpse the pain of God. Before laying out this dissertation's contours, therefore, I turn first to one of the primary drivers of the theology of divine impassibility: Aristotle.

Aristotle, Moltmann, and Impassibility

Aristotle, as inherited by the likes of Augustine and Aquinas as well as al-Kindī, Ibn Sīnā, al- Fārābī, and other Muslim philosophers, asserted the ultimate impassibility of the divine unmoved Mover. In his *De Caelo* Aristotle asserts, "It is the primary that moves the primary, the simple the simple, the indestructible and ungenerated that which is indestructible and ungenerated. Since then that which is moved, being a body, is nevertheless unchanging, how should the mover, which is incorporeal, be changed?"[31] For the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century philosopher Franz Brentano, Aristotle makes a distinction between the passible intellect (which is corruptible, corporeal, and common to both soul and body) and the passive intellect, which is impassible.[32] Importantly as God is pure receptive intellect; God is *de facto* impassible, for the active intellect is incorruptible. Brentano writes,

> [What] is the mental faculty that is capable of being affected [*nous pathētikos*]? It is the imagination which, as a sensory faculty according to chapter 4 [of *De Anima*, book 1] does not partake in the impassibility [*apatheia*] of the receptive intellect; for this reason

[31] Aristotle, *The Essential Aristotle*, comp. Rajasir (New York: Start Publishing, LLC, 2012), Book II, §6.

[32] Franz Brentano, *The Psychology of Aristotle: In Particular His Doctrine of the Active Intellect* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 148.

> book 1 of the *Politics* contrasts the sensory part as the 'part that can be affected' [*pathētikon morion*] with the intellectual part.[33]

In other words, God is immune to passibility since sense is a property that only lower beings possess.

Two of Aristotle's other works shed further light on his doctrine of God. First, his *Physics* and his *Metaphysics* seem on the surface to contradict each other on a small but important point. Is the Deity a first (primary) Cause or an unmoved Mover? Some scholars are willing to conflate the two terms and refer to God as a prime Mover (Broadie, Lawrenz).[34] Others take a more subtle approach, noting that in *Physics* VII and VIII God seems to be an initial cause that set everything in motion, while in *Metaphysics* Lambda the Deity somewhat stoically moves through attraction rather than action. The Dutch Thomist Leo Elders points out a contrast between these two doctrines, but comes up with a rather ingenious resolution. For that we need to understand multiplicity and singularity.[35]

Is this Deity singular or plural? Elders suggests that nothing prevents there from being multiple primary Causes but that there can only be one unmoved Mover. Therefore we have a hierarchy; the prime Cause is subsumed under the unmoved Mover. God is thus ultimately and utterly impassible. Through the logical progression here described it seems that God is incapable of (or immune to) change, even intellectual change.[36]

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[33] Ibid, 141.

[34] Sarah Waterlow Broadie, "What Does Aristotle's Prime Mover Do?" (Princeton: *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter*, 1994), 2; Jürgen Lawrenz, "Aristotle's Prime Mover," September 2, 2019, https://askaphilosopher.org/2019/09/02/aristotles-prime-mover/.

[35] Leo Elders, *Aristotle's Theology: A Commentary on a Book of the Metaphysics* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1972), 13.

[36] Ibid.

Finally, is Aristotle's God omniscient or ignorant? Some recent scholars have elected the latter option based in a statement by Plotinus that, "the intellect is ignorant of what is above it through an ignorance more noble than knowledge (*'ilm*)."[37] This doctrine came to be called "*docta ignorantia*" or learned ignorance. Franz Brentano finds a resurgence of this philosophical contention: both in *De Anima*, Book 1 and *Metaphysics*, Book 3 there are statements such as, "So it comes about that according to his view the most blessed God is the most ignorant of all."[38] Brentano disagrees with a plain reading of such arguments: "Aristotle's doctrine demands that God be omniscient rather than wholly ignorant."[39] Furthermore, he asks,

> In what sense…is the deity everything? That it is everything by thinking everything is obvious, for it is pure thought [and] it thinks everything by thinking a single thought…And thus that which is the principle of everything knows everything by knowing itself, since whatever else there is only is what it is because of what it has received from this principle, and therefore is nothing except what it is in relation to this principle.[40]

At their own paces, Western Christianity and the Islamic *falsafa* tradition each assumed a doctrine of God derived from Peripatetic and neo-Platonic reasoning. This doctrine included a notion of a God beyond all human experience—the experience of psychic and physical change—that has translated into an understanding of God as beyond all things graspable.

How then are theologians to reconcile the theosophical implication that God has so outpaced earthlings that God cannot relate to their experiences? Herein lies Moltmann's challenge to the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon and, by his own extension, to what he calls any "medieval" theology that fails to account for the fundamental human experience of God as

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[37] Peter Adamson, "The Theology of Aristotle," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2017), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/theology-aristotle/.

[38] Aristotle in Brentano, *Psychology*, 129.

[39] Brentano, *Psychology*, 132.

[40] Ibid, 129.

being present *to, with,* and even *in* pathetic human experience.[41] He challenges classical doctrines of God: "A Christian theology which sees its problem and its task in knowing God in the crucified Christ, cannot be *pure theory*…but must become a *critical theory of God*."[42] He sharply criticizes impassibility:

> [E]ven apart from [the] extreme position, which Dostoevsky worked through again and again in *The Demons*, a God who cannot suffer is poorer than any man. For a God who is incapable of suffering is a being who cannot be involved. Suffering and injustice do not affect him. And because he is so completely insensitive, he cannot be affected or shaken by anything. He cannot weep, for he has no tears. But the one who cannot suffer cannot love either. So he is also a loveless being. Aristotle's God cannot love; he can only be loved by all non-divine beings by virtue of his perfection and beauty, and in this way draw them to him. The 'unmoved Mover' is a 'loveless Beloved'. If he is the ground of the love (eros) of all things for him (*causa prima*), and at the same time his own cause (*causa sui*), he is the beloved who is in love with himself; a Narcissus in a metaphysical degree: *Deus incurvatus in se*. [Such a deity] becomes apathic. But in that case is he a God? Is he not rather a stone?[43]

The Aristotelian tradition has long been a strong voice in Muslim and Christian theosophy; and Moltmann's critique is immensely important. The God of Aristotle, so carefully constructed, is of increasingly little use to a world of existential crises. Moltmann makes this clear toward the end of *The Crucified God*. Having challenged impassibility, he describes five "vicious circles" of the modern world that can be broken through the liberating power of a passible deity: circles of economic exploitation, political authoritarianism, cultural alienation, environmental degradation, and existential disheartenment.[44] A God of compassion—literally, "feeling with"—is the starting point for a theological paradigm by which the loosening of these shackles is to be realized.

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[41] Cf. Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 103.
[42] Ibid, 68f.
[43] Ibid, 222.
[44] Ibid, 330ff.

I contend that passibility can take five primary forms. It includes the suffering and love described by Moltmann (to which might be added other psychic passions like wrath and joy); in the doctrine of God implied by Ḥusayn's martyrologists one also finds temporality, deference, and partisanship.[45] Temporality challenges God's immunity to change over time; deference challenges God's immunity to reactivity; partisanship challenges God's immunity to susceptibility. The God of Ḥusayn displays these properties in light of the inconceivable reality of Ḥusayn being murdered despite—or even because of—his righteousness. An impassible God would likely be totally removed from, or predetermine, human history rather than reacting to it, would be the final arbiter of cosmic decisions rather than allowing human participation in such arbitration, and would show no desire or preference for one group of humans above another—especially if the chosen group were to be marked by a history of pathetic suffering and defeat. A plain reading of the *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* texts does not point to such an impassible God.[46] Rather, I will show, they raise the idea of God as partisan, which is an important but perhaps unexpected turn in conversation about passibility.

The Case for Partisanship

While categories such as passion and temporality are clear markers of passibility, partisanship is not always named as a criterion for it; I draw on the philosopher of emotions

[45] For another definition of impassibility, cf. Richard Creel quoted in Marcel Sarot, "Patripassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God. Some Historical and Systematic Considerations," *Religious Studies* 26 no. 3 (1990): 366.

[46] For the early idea of passibility in Islam, consider the anthropomorphism debate: does God possess human characteristics such as corporeality? Compare: "A review of the history of dogmatic development in Islam reveals, however, that during the formative period—that is, the period to about 950—divine transcendence was only one alternative among several models attempting to explain God's unity. Indeed, it coexisted alongside its antithesis, 'assimilation' (tashbīh)." Wesley Williams, "Aspectsof the Creed of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal: A Study of Anthropomorphism in Early Islamic Discourse," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 34, no.3 (2002): https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/stable/3879671?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

Anastasia Scrutton's treatment of jealousy to suggest a correlate. Quoting Augustine, she posits that, "He that is not jealous, is not in love."[47] Jealousy and love here are linked.

Scrutton theorizes that passibility has a number of possible components. One of them, for her, is jealousy. Drawing on the ethicist philosopher Martha Nussbaum, she notes that jealousy is an emotion. [48] Thus, the God who declares in Ex 34:14, "My Name is Jealous," is necessarily a deity susceptible to emotion. Scrutton further distinguishes between hate (which is associated with envy) and anger (which is associated with jealousy).[49] Divine wrath is another marker of divine passibility. She examines jealousy from a psychological perspective; according to her jealousy can make one irrational. This concept is difficult to apply to an omniscient deity; at this turn the waters seem to be muddied. To solve this dilemma, she turns to the idea of love as it pertains to jealousy. She distinguishes between "personally involved love, and love without intense personal involvement."[50] There are "two models of love: benevolence and beneficence, or that which views the subject as a benefactor, and personal involved love, that which conceives the subject as lover."[51] Personally involved love is the type that can involve jealousy. Building on Scrutton's robust exploration of jealousy as a facet of divine passibility, I see divine partisanship as an extension that follows organically from the types of issues that arise in discussing God in terms of jealousy and involved love. I define partisanship as a preferential option for a particular person or people. Jealousy and involved love as Scrutton defines them entail partiality.

[47] Augustine in Scrutton, *Thinking Through Feeling*, 122.
[48] Scrutton, *Thinking Through Feeling*, 122.
[49] Ibid, 125.
[50] Ibid, 128.
[51] Ibid, 128f.

For Scrutton, a "context for God's *qanna'* is divine 'zeal' for God's elect."[52] The Hebrew concept of *qanna'*—typically translated as "jealousy"—is related to partisanship.[53] Jealousy and partisanship are intimately tied to emotion and therefore to passibility: "It does not make sense to say that God has these beliefs and desires without having the associated emotions—for what is the 'emotion' other than the beliefs and desires?"[54] Partisanship seems to fly in the face of universality—God plays favorites, for example, in the story of Ḥusayn.[55] Particularity and preference seem to trump the concept of an impartial, impassible Lord of the Universe. Here again Scrutton's thought is useful; she notes that jealousy, like partisanship but unlike envy, "concern[s] exclusive objects."[56] She continues, "In jealousy the subject construes the desired object as a person, while in envy the subject construes the desired object as a thing… Jealousy is frequently unfriendly or malicious."[57] Following the contemporary philosopher Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, she claims that "Jealousy is often interpreted as a sign of our caring and love...Like love, jealousy typically presupposes some type of commitment underlying the relationship."[58] I suggest that the same holds true for partisanship. In the case of Ḥusayn, God is partisan toward Ḥusayn's extended family; equally, Ḥusayn is a partisan of divine justice over and against the justice that the Umayyads seem to exemplify. Partisanship is therefore mutual, not unlike a covenant relationship.

But what kind of love describes a jealous, partisan God? Scrutton turns to the Hellenistic distinction between *agapē* (which frames God as a benefactor) and *eros* (which sees God as a

[52] Ibid, 128.

[53] Ibid, 128.

[54] Ibid, 131.

[55] Cf. Nasrin Rouzati, *Trial and Tribulation in the Qur'an: A Mystical Theodicy* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2015), 53: "Allah supported the believers because they called on Him; He heard their prayers and was aware of their position, hence, granting them the victory."

[56] Scrutton, *Thinking Through Feeling*, 122.

[57] Ibid, 123.

[58] Ibid, 125.

lover). She submits that, "Eros allows for the possibility of divine jealousy, while agape does not...If we reject divine eros, we must also reject divine jealousy."[59] Ultimately she concludes that *agapē* and *eros* are intimately linked—God is simultaneously merciful (beyond affectedness) and compassionate (feeling with the creature). This has drastic consequences for the doctrine of God, for now an omnipotent God is vulnerable. While Scrutton does not think that omnipotence and vulnerability are compatible with one another, I contend that God is capacious enough to have both properties.[60] A deity who is jealous and partisan, marked not only by *agapē* but also by *eros*, retains sovereignty while being emmeshed in love for a particular people. Therefore, I contend that partisanship should join such ranks as passion (love, suffering, etc.), temporality, and deference in the dimensions of divine passibility.

Passibility in the Ḥusayn Drama

The primary Islamic source analysis chapters will discuss various aspects of *maqtal* material. Chapter IV will present *maqātil* from the Abbasid era (roughly 750-1258).[61] Chapters V and VI will explore two motifs from these texts: the persistent and salient theme of liquids and cosmic longsuffering. This dissertation will take a close look at various aspects of *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* from the Abbāsid Era (standard dates: 750-1258). It will draw heavily on six classical texts: (particularly the latter three; I will justify these choices in Chapter IV):

1. *Kitāb Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* by Abū Mikhnaf (d. 773).[62]

[59] Ibid. 133.

[60] Cf. Ibid, 131.

[61] The Abbasid caliphate, founded by descendants of one of the Prophet's paternal uncle al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib (d. ca. 653), overthrew the ruling Umayyads and centered in modern-day Iraq. It lasted until the Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century and witnessed Islam's "Golden Age," a time of great scientific and cultural flourishing.

[62] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*.

2. *Tārīkh ar-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* by al-Ṭabarī (d. 923).[63]
3. *Maqātil al-Ṭālabiyyīn* by al-Iṣfahānī (d. 967).[64]
4. *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* by al-Khwārizmī (d. 1172).[65]
5. *Muthīr al-Ahzān* by Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī (d. 1247 or 1252).[66]
6. *al-Luhūf fī Qatlā al-Ṭufūf* by ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 1265).[67]

The latter three texts will comprise the subject of extensive close reading in later chapters. For now, it will be helpful to describe their overarching positions on divine passibility. It is true that for the writers of *maqātil al-Ḥusayn,* the doctrine of a God beyond human frailty was assumed.[68] Nevertheless, these authors are much less concerned with preserving the celestial realm from any semblance of passibility than they are with trying to express the magnitude of injustice associated with Ḥusayn's murder. Through their writings they communicate to their readers the limitlessness of the pain that emanates eternally from this horrific moment in history. While philosophical systems can challenge hints of divine passibility in the *maqātil* on point-by-point bases or reject them outright as mere literary devices, these texts' plain reading tells the story of a drama in which God fully participates as not just the predicate but also an object vulnerable to the drama's consequences. The Peripatetic / Scholastic deity assumed by what Moltmann might call "medieval" theology would be barely recognizable to those who bore witness to the experience of this slaying. God is neither aloof to nor unmoved by the unfolding of these events; *maqtal* writers seem to embed this despite the vulnerability to which it might

[63] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk vol. 19 – The Caliphate of Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah*, trans. I.K.A. Howard (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).

[64] Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil al-Ṭālibīyīn* (Cairo: Ṭibaʿ bi-Dār Iḥyaʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiya, 1949).

[65] ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, ed.MuHammad al-SamAwI (Qum: Dār Anwār al-Hudā, 1997).

[66] Al-Jalīl Najm al-Dīn Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar ibn Habatallāh ibn Namā al-Ḥillī. *Muthīr al-Aḥzān* (Beirut, Dār al-ʿUlūm, 2004).

[67] ʿAlī ibn Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf fī Qatlā al-Ṭufūf wa-Ḥakayat al-Makhtār fī Akhadh al-Thāʾr* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿalamā li-l-Maṭbuʿāt, 1993).

[68] The refrain, *Allāhu akbar* (God is greater) typifies an Islamic response to passibilism: God is beyond experiences of the human condition.

expose them theologically. Cosmic passion is visible in the aforementioned accounts of Ḥusayn's slaying. At this point the concept of the liminal hero is crucial, for suffering that echoes in the heavens is best seen on earth in those that straddle the two realms. Ḥusayn's station as a liminal hero must be established. This dissertation is an answer to Moltmann's conception of Aristotelian impassibility. Investigating the ways in which emotions such as jealousy and love apply to the divine can invite a broader question about the nature of emotion and its conception within religious discourses. The next section will present some views on emotions, and the nature of emotion, in religious thought.

Theological Affective Drama: Emotions in Religious Discourse

The question of the legitimacy of attributing emotions to the divine is one aspect of what can be seen as a broader discourse of emotions in religious thought. Emotions as a theosophical category figure prominently in some religious discourses in ways that have recently been investigated and analyzed by scholars who have worked to shed light on the ways that emotions as a category can be attributed to God, for example, as well as the dynamics and significations of particular emotions such as sadness in humans. This section provides an overview of the theological affective and how it has been explored in some relevant recent scholarship. This broader discussion is important in situating and contextualizing the affective drama of the Ḥusayn narratives within religious discourses on emotions. Many of the concepts that are at work in these discourses have resonance in the Ḥusayn passion: emotions and their expressions (such as tears) figure prominently in the affective drama of Ḥusayn's passion, and as we will see, not just Ḥusayn and his family, but also nature, prophets, and even God express emotional responses to Karbalāʾ. Additionally, the narratives of the Karbalāʾ story are composed in such a

way as to elicit an emotional response from their readers and listeners. However, there are ways in which narratives of Ḥusayn's passion are distinguished within this larger field of thought. I will conclude this section by drawing attention to some of these distinguishing features.

One way of examining a role of emotion in religious discourse is to look at debates about whether emotion can be attributed to the divine on a conceptual level. Within dominant Western discourse, this debate has focused on exploring the ontology of emotions and how they intersect with conceptions of the divine. Anastasia Scrutton, writing about this development, identifies an evolution in both the concept of passibility and its (Western) reception:

> Up until the end of the 1800s, the 'orthodox' and mainstream position was that God is impassible. At around about the turn of the 20th century, there was an almost complete passibilist revolution. The new passibilist 'orthodoxy' became a common theological response to the First World War, and, later, to the Second World War and the Holocaust. During this time, the idea that God suffers 'with us' became an almost-ubiquitous way of dealing with the extreme suffering that was happening.[69]

Drawing on Edith Stein, Richard Creel, and Paul Fiddes, Scrutton maps out possible explanations for and descriptions of God's suffering. She writes, "The idea that God's suffering is closely related to God's love has been strengthened by studies of the Hebrew prophets which speak of God's 'pathos' for his people (e.g. Heschel, Fretheim)."[70] Love, then, is fundamental both to passibility and to the doctrine of God.

Scrutton lays out the classical case for impassibility:

> Arguments for impassibilism (or against passibilism) are often made on the basis of the nature of emotions. Four alleged characteristics of emotion that would preclude divine passibilism are: (i) mutability and temporality; (ii) irrationality; (iii) their tendency to make the subject passive or powerless; and (iv) the fact that they require a body.[71]

[69] Scrutton, "Divine Passibility: God and Emotion,"Philosophy Compass vol. 8 no 9, 2013), 866.
[70] Ibid, 871.
[71] Ibid, 867.

She makes an important point about divine versus human passibility vis. the fourth point, corporeality—it would seem that without a body, "an all-knowing, all-powerful and incorporeal God would not" possess the emotions to be truly passible—God could empathize but not sympathize.[72] She critiques this argument: "if we can control and cultivate emotions to some extent, and if their relationship to our bodies is not a necessary one, then there is less reason to preclude them in the case of God."[73] God can emote even without a body, and for Scrutton emotion is as much a part of suffering as experience. The passible deity that she proposes experiences suffering alongside feeling it. This understanding of the divine has been on the ascendence of late:

> Over the last two and a half decades, the philosophical literature on the impassibility debate has defined 'passibility' primarily in terms of emotion (or feelings or affects) and mutability. The question of whether God suffers is seen as an important sub-strand of the debates about whether God has emotions and changes.[74]

Questions linger: does God emote? Can God be sad, joyful, hurt, wrathful, loving—in a word, passionate? Recent Christian theological scholarship has voiced an affirmative; does this have a correlate in the (Shīʿa) Islamic tradition? Can the God of Islam control God's emotions, and what does this mean for passibility? In *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*, the Islamic deity is clearly moved by Fāṭima's cosmic despair, as we will later see, but to what extent is God at the mercy of the subsequent emotions? To understand further how some religious discourses have conceived of emotions, next I will take a closer look at how particular emotions such as sadness and psychological pain figure in some prominent religious scholars' thought. This discussion will shed light on a range of religious views on emotions that are particularly central to the *maqtal*

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[72] Ibid, 866.

[73] *Ibid.*; cf. Marcel Sarot,. *God, Passibility and Corporeality (Studies in Philosophical Theology)* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Publishers, 1992), 92.

[74] Scrutton, "Divine Passibility," 867.

narratives that are the focus of later chapters of this dissertation. As we will see, those narratives present their own view of sadness and emotion as they apply to pious humans and to God.

Many pre-modern religious traditions explore tears, suffering, and other emotional phenomena as theological categories. I turn now to this broader concept of the emotive in a wider religious context. Much recent scholarship has addressed this issue. For example, Françoise Mirguet writes extensively about the role of emotion in ancient Jewish literature.[75] She links compassion with vulnerability in regard to dealing with the emotions of others: "Jewish texts written in Greek during the Hellenistic period often emphasize the emotions provoked in the self by the suffering of others."[76] These others include, strikingly, one's enemies—one's morality increases when one has pity for one's suffering foe.[77] Responding emotionally to the suffering of another person positions one in a particular way toward that other person: this positioning could be one of moral superiority (as compassion is a virtue) or of vulnerability in "identification with the sufferer."[78]

We further see reflections on the theme of suffering in the medieval Jewish tradition. For example, the major tenth century scholar Sa'adia Ga'on contends that "trial and testing" is non-punitive—it is a trial and tribulation from God—though other rabbis (including Maimonides) argue that the righteous do not suffer unjustly.[79] In the view of some rabbinical authorities, suffering builds moral/spiritual character, though in the eyes of others, all suffering is the result

[75] Françoise Mirguet. "Emotional Responses to the Pain of Others in Josephus's Rewritten Scriptures and the Testament of Zebulun: Between Power and Vulnerability" in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 133, No. 4 (2014).

[76] Ibid, 839.

[77] Ibid, 856.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Michael J. Harris, "'But Now My Eye Has Seen You': *Yissurin Shel Ahavah* as Divine Intimacy Theodicy" in *The Torah U-Madda Journal*, vol. 17 (2016-17), 68.

of sin.[80] Still other rabbinical authorities have claimed that suffering can be an atonement for sins—given by God out of love, to purify the person's soul.[81] Some, indeed, argue that suffering can lead to intimacy with the divine.[82]

Islam in Particular

Within the Islamic context specifically, much has been written about pre-modern understandings of sadness and tears, their functions, and meanings. Tribulation (*balāʾ*) and sadness (*ḥuzn*) are major concepts in this vein. Islamic thinkers have understood human sadness and its relationship to piety and to the divine in a range of ways. Within Islamic thought *ḥuzn* has been a central term; *shahawāt* (desires) and *humuum* (concerns) have been part of the same semantic field. Paul Heck notes a philosophical spectrum underlying conceptions of sadness; they range from the Stoic to the Neo-Platonic.[83] There may be a third paradigm, the Aristotelian perspective.[84] Along these lines,

> [A] number of classical [Islamic] scholars composed works on it or included chapters on it in larger works. Amidst these diverse works, one notices two trends: one that sees sadness as a trial from God to be endured; and another that sees it as the mark of spiritual virtue and thus as something that guides the believer in service of the virtuous life.[85]

Thus, for some thinkers, there is a possible upside to sadness: virtue. The Sūfī al-Qushayrī, for example, sees sadness in a positive light.[86] He explains, "The sadness that is praiseworthy here is not sadness for the things of this world but sadness as a result of one's

[80] Ibid, 72f.

[81] Ibid,.74.

[82] Ibid, 76.

[83] Paul Heck, "Sadness in Classical Islam: Its Relation to the Goals of Religion," Emotions Across Cultures Working Papers (New York: NYU Faculty Digital Archive, 2014), 1.

[84] Ibid. Heck suggests pursuance of this third paradigm.

[85] Ibid, 6.

[86] Ibid.9.

aspiration for the next."[87] Sadness can be virtuous: "as one grows in virtue by taking joy in the good, so one does so by being moved to sorrow in the face of evil."[88] While some scholars do not see sadness in such positive terms—the philosopher al-Kindī, for instance, contends that if someone is spiritually fit s/he will not be sad—other scholars, like Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, note that the Prophet was "continuously sad."[89] For this thinker, it is evident that the liminal hero *par excellence* (Muḥammad) was touched by melancholy.[90] The idea of sadness being virtuous is also reflected in a saying attributed to a major early Sunnī scholar whose hadith transmissions are included in the six canonical Sunnī collections:

> Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna (d. 815) is mentioned as saying that if a person in this umma (the community of Muslims) weeps with sadness, God will pardon the entire community because of his tears. The statement is a reference to the concept of the apotropaic saint whose tears indicate his spiritually elevated rank and the favor he enjoys with God and thus his ability to ward off the punishment that the community deserves from God.[91]

In addition to sadness as such, medieval Islamic texts address tears—their purpose, their authenticity, and their religious value. [92] "If God-fearingness epitomizes the ideal human response or attitude toward God, tears were—at least for some mystics and ascetics—its maximum somatic manifestation."[93] In pockets of medieval Sunnī and Sūfī worlds, tears are praiseworthy if they are out of awe of God; negative if they are a reaction to the mundane (as in

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid. 3.

[90] I address the concept of a liminal hero in the coming sections.

[91] Ibid.9.

[92] Linda G. Jones, "'He Made Others Cry': Crying as a Sign of Pietistic Authenticity or Deception in Medieval Islamic Preaching" in *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2012), 104, 126.

[93] Ibid, 103.

crying over the dead).[94] There is also concern for the authenticity of tears—they could be sincere or they could be hiding "base sentiments." Sincerity in expressing grief is important, and feigned tears have no merit: the Qur'an and hadith in some places praise secret piety over public piety (*jahr*), and the phenomenon of charlatan preachers with fake tears is attested in literature.[95]

There is a hadith that many have interpreted to proscribe weeping over the dead; this type of crying is seen in this hadith as rejecting or denying God's will. Still, the elicitation of tears is a major theme in medieval Sunni discourse. These tears are meaningful: "Tears signify; they are an exterior sign of some interior sentiment or affective state."[96] They are available to all Muslims, not just mystics and ascetics.[97] Preachers have the responsibility of eliciting genuine emotional reactions from their hearers, and they use a variety of rhetorical strategies to do so.[98] Crying in Islam is thus a complex issue and one tied closely to piety (*taqwa*) and virtue (*faḍl*).

Another key concept in the realm of emotions in Islamic thought and practice is that of *balāʾ*/*ibtilāʾ*, roughly translatable as "trial," "tribulation," or "affliction," but also having positive valences in limited usage. This concept is prominent across Islamic societies at different times and places, often in connection with hardships that individuals endure. One starting point for understanding the concept of *balāʾ*/*ibtilāʾ* is the Qurʾan, in which the terms appear, and exegesis of these verses. In the Qurʾan, *balāʾ* can have the aforementioned negative connotations, but can also be positive, as it is a sign of divine favor. Through trial, God bestows blessing, both worldly and eschatological. Would a believer take credit for these blessings or attribute them to God? Herein lies the crux of the issue—eternal reward is granted to those who patiently endure

[94] Jones focuses on 10th-14th century texts from the Maghreb, Iberia, and Mashreq. Jones, "Others," 104.
[95] Ibid, 104, 123.
[96] Ibid, 103.
[97] Ibid, 106.
[98] Ibid, 125.

tribulation and suffering. Exegesis (both Sunnī and Shīʿī, classical and modern) consistently expresses the idea that *balāʾ* is a test of the person's loyalty to obeying God's commands and doing good deeds with sincerity: "On the manifestation of balā, the exegeses are in convergence that both adversity and prosperity are means by which man is put to the test."[99] *Balāʾ* reveals a person's 'true character' and how attached s/he is to worldly blessings. Ultimately the upside to *balāʾ* is found in the afterlife, a reward that encourages people "to accept hardship and demonstrate endurance."[100] There are references to *balāʾ* and *ibtilāʾ* in the hadith as well; these references draw on the negative valence of the terms (as affliction and tribulation). Another important classical Islamic text that deals with the concept at length is *Nahj al-Balāgha*, the collection of sermons, sayings, and writings attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. In that text, *balāʾ* is construed as having the power to transform, a constructive force that can change negative qualities in a person into good ones and provide to a person the opportunity to express remorse and regret for past wrongdoings.[101]

Balāʾ/*ibtilāʾ* is a concept that has had salience throughout the fabric of Islamic societies classical and modern. It figures in discourses as diverse as psychology, law, and political philosophy. Examples include the following. A research study about counseling in Malaysia found that counselors guided by Islamic principles in their work—and their clients—framed personal difficulties in terms of *ibtilāʾ*, focusing the client's attention on obtaining happiness in the hereafter by enduring trials and tribulations in this world without deviating from a focus on obedience to God.[102] The classical Islamic scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) writes in a

[99] Rouzati, *Trial and Tribulation*, 59.
[100] Ibid, 33, 59.
[101] Ibid, 34.
[102] Norazlina Zakaria and Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir, "Theories and modules applied in Islamic counseling practices in Malaysia," *Journal of Religion and Healthi*, vol. 56 no. 2, (2017).

legal text that *ibtilāʾ* is mercy (*al-ibtilāʾ raḥma*). Punishments serve to transform sinners, so that in this sense, inflicting trials and tribulations upon a person is mercy, the thing that allows them to change for the better. The modern reformer Hasan al-Turabi (d. 2016) saw modernity as the ultimate tribulation specifically for Muslims, and the term *ibtilāʾ* is as such a keyword in his theological writings. He saw Muslims living in modern times as having the responsibility of using modern ideas and urban life as a path to serving God.[103]

Normative Islamic tradition has conceived of harm and affliction to a person as occurring with God's permission. Sometimes, the person is seen as responsible for her or his own suffering, a form of trial (*balāʾ*). This leads to one perspective that suffering is part of God's plan and should not be combatted (even by efforts to heal); however, another perspective, also based in the hadith literature, emphasizes that God has created cures for ailments, and these cures should not be neglected or ignored.[104] The Qur'an states, "Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere."[105]

We also find the concept of divinely-induced suffering in the Jewish tradition. The Egyptian Jewish scholar Sa'adia Ga'on (d. 942) notes that "trial and testing" is non-punitive—it is a trial and tribulation from God—though other rabbis (including Maimonides) contend that the righteous do not suffer unjustly.[106] According to Michael Harris, suffering builds moral/spiritual character, though for some rabbinical authorities all suffering is the result of sin.[107] Still, other

[103] Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, "A Theology of Modernity: Hasan Al-Turabi and Islamic Renewal in Sudan," *Africa Today*, vol. 46, no. 3/4, (1999): 201f.
[104] Abdulaziz Sachedina in Scott J. Fitzpatrick, *et. al.* "Religious Perspectives on Human Suffering: Implications for Medicine and Bioethics," *Journal of Religion and Health* February 2016, vol. 55, no. 1 (2016): 168f.
[105] Q 2:155.
[106] Harris, "My Eye," 68.
[107] Ibid, 72f.

rabbinical authorities have claimed that suffering can be an atonement for sins—given by God out of love, to purify the person's soul.[108] Some, indeed, argue that suffering can lead to intimacy with the divine.[109] In short, trial and tribulation are complex subjects across religious traditions; the question of theodicy is especially salient in the issue of the suffering of liminal heroes such as Ḥusayn.

Conclusion

The foregoing overview has shown some of the complex and nuanced ways in which religious traditions have dealt with emotions and their manifestations, especially sadness and tears, as well as their causes (e.g. *balāʾ*/*ibtilāʾ*). Keeping in mind this broader picture can help situate the narratives of Ḥusayn's passion within the larger scope of this history of religious thought on emotion. To conclude this section, I will draw attention to some poignant ways in which the texts on Ḥusayn's martyrdom resonate with the aforementioned texts and some points that render the *maqātil* unique and divergent.

The texts that devote attention to particular rhetorical strategies in liturgical poetry are helpful in providing vocabulary and ways of discussing literary aspects of religious texts for and about sad occasions, and particularly the manner in which authors of these texts have used specific devices to evoke emotional reactions in their audiences. In this regard, Laura S. Lieber describes a formative moment of existential crisis that Jewish and Christian liturgical poems have addressed: "the destruction of a temple, the crucifixion of a Savior."[110] This literary approach is also present in narratives of Ḥusayn's passion, in which, as we will see, authors

[108] Ibid, 74.

[109] Ibid,76.

[110] Laura S. Lieber, "Theater of the Holy: Performative Elements of Late Ancient Hymnography" in *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 108, no. 3 (2015): 329.

construct their texts in ways that elicit genuine and immediate emotional responses from their readers and listeners. These texts and their audiences' reactions play an important role in Shi'i thought and piety.

As we have seen, Islamic thought has a lot to say about human sadness and passion, but relatively less has been written about divine correlates to these phenomena. This dissertation will contribute to filling this lacuna by addressing the ways in which some prominent Islamic narrative texts have contributed to conceptions of sadness, tears, and passion among both spiritually elevated humans and cosmic entities as well as Godself. Indeed, the classical *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* texts view tears as being connected to virtue, as later analysis will show, and attribute sadness and related emotions to pious humans as well as cosmic beings. Reflecting this ethos, normative Shīʿī ritual practice emphasizes the virtue of sadness as expressed in commemoration for Ḥusayn—shedding tears for his martyrdom, particularly during ʿAshurāʾ rituals, is highly prized.

Returning to Scrutton's discussion of the implications of attributing emotion to the divine, we might ask the question: If sadness increases the holiness of creatures in the theology of *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*, what might be the implications for holy beings to be sad? This dissertation will show that liminal and cosmic figures are deeply grieved at Ḥusayn's martyrdom. If there is an analogue between human and divine sadness, according to this theological paradigm, divine passibility would not detract from God's holiness but rather affirm it. God may be fully omnipotent yet also fully vulnerable. In short, by sharing the property of sadness with humans, the passible deity is simultaneously elevated and elevating, bringing the beloved community a salvation forged in the tragedy of Karbalāʾ. I contend that within this paradigm, divine sadness is existential, and that it therefore humanizes a passible deity to a greater extent than has been

classically explicated. Ḥusayn's suffering falls into the category of *ibtilāʾ*, a trial and tribulation that he must endure. However, it is an *ibtilāʾ* that is distinguished from the individual, personal trials that we have seen Islamic scholars discuss above. It is different in that Ḥusayn is a liminal figure whose stature in his community's eschatology is sublime: the repercussions of his experience extend beyond himself as an individual. Indeed, it is of utmost significance for his whole community—his affliction plays an ongoing, redemptive role in the life of his community. I will unpack this salvific economy in the coming chapters.

Chapter Overviews

This final introductory section offers a chapter-by-chapter summary of this dissertation in order to provide an overview of the complete project and its organization. The chapters together take three main turns. The first major section is devoted to laying out my underlying methodology, in which I propose four key concepts. Next, I provide an examination of the theological turns and existential motivations underlying Moltmann's *The Crucified God* in order to explicate the ways he understands divine passibility. Following this, I read and analyze a selection of accounts of Ḥusayn's slaying (*maqātil al-Ḥusayn*) through the lens of divine passibility, exploring the ways in which the cosmic drama of Ḥusayn's passion opens up room for a re-thinking of classical philosophical assumptions regarding the doctrine of God in Islam. In doing so I aim to show where passibility is found in Islam's liminal spaces. These three turns are taken over the course of the next five chapters of this dissertation. Following overviews of those chapters, I will close by foreshadowing the discussions that the conclusion chapter comprises, including the areas of continued disconnect between Moltmannian Christianity and a *maqtal*-influenced Islam.

Chapter II: Methodology

My methodology chapter focuses on four concepts and the way I apply them in this dissertation: "liminality," "theology from below," "narrative theology," and "the fuser of horizons." Theological, philosophical, sociological, and anthropological disciplines variously incorporate all four, but I will nuance each to describe the conditions of possibility for a non-Muslim to discuss the Islamic deity through reading narrative accounts of an Islamic hero. At the root of this challenge are questions of meaning and truth in a postmodern milieu. Establishing the possibility of revealing meaning through reliance on a cadre of twentieth century linguistic scholars will open the door to interreligious theologizing.

The first concept discussed in this chapter will be liminality; I will briefly trace its conceptual history from Arnold van Gennep through Victor Turner and finally to the contemporary cultural scholar Bjørn Thomassen. Van Gennep's insights into the ambivalence and anxiety associated with rites of passage led to a theory of the liminal moment which Thomassen suggests is "permatized" (that is, converted from a moment to a stasis) as culture experiences modernity. I will take this concept, which amounts to something like static flux, and extend it to those heroes who perpetually straddle the temporal and cosmic realms.

Such heroes are best known through the stories that are told about them, so I will turn next to a "narrative" theological approach that begins "from below," with a doctrine of God as understood through existential encounter rather than being derived from philosophical syllogisms. Narrativists first understand God not from higher-than-heaven metaphysics but from the human experience of the divine in terrestrial life. The paradigm of Karl Rahner's "ascending

Christology" relies on a logic that is particularly germane here.[111] His *Gundaxiom* that the inner divine economy is identical to God as revealed transcendently opens space for narrative rather than philosophy to uncover theological realities. The work of the theologian Hans Frei, who prioritizes the biblical narrative over philosophical system will be helpful at this point. Having established a particular approach to theology, I will turn to a specific application of this approach: interreligious dialogical compatibility. To that end, I will address a fundamental problem of religious pluralism, the problem of understanding. If Islam and Christianity are to be put into dialogue with one another, they must be able to communicate in a mutually intelligible idiom.

Of crucial importance to projects of inter-traditional dialogue is the challenge of thinking theologically across religio-cultural traditions while still preserving their particularities and while guarding against the temptation to read one's own traditional commitments into others. Religious traditions have their own specific grammars and particular truth claims, which can be an impediment to mutual understanding and meaningful cross-traditional conversation. The discipline of comparative theology therefore must answer a vital question: How can parties who affirm competing truth claims converse with one another? The specific context in which this study will negotiate this question is the comparison of concepts of the divine held by Jürgen Moltmann and the *maqtal* writers of the late Abbasid era. Christianity is not Islam, and certainly death of God postliberalism is not medieval Shīʿism. If these two worldviews are to be mutually intelligible without one subsuming the other, and if a theologian is to comment on both with equal balance after the "linguistic turn," a philosophy of religious pluralism must account for the

[111] Rahner insists that ascending Christology is congruous with a "descending" approach but remains ontologically primary – I will unpack this important insight in Chapter II. Briefly, what is important for Rahner is the theologian's *starting point*, human experience.

difficulties of intelligibility, meaning, and metaphysical epistemology. A number of twentieth century scholars, read synchronically, can aid in the quest for such a philosophy.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), Gilbert Ryle (1900-76), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) each contributed greatly to the "linguistic turn" and its ancillary concepts; this chapter will account for each. Specifically, it will address notions of cultural grammar, implication threads, horizons of meaning, thick description, and careful reading. I will establish myself as what I will call a "fuser of horizons;" someone who seeks authentically to record the data at hand, subject to limitations but earnest in the endeavor. As a "fuser of horizons" I will attempt to report the narrative theological commitments inherent to the late Abbasid *maqātil*. Through this approach, as well as my adaptation of Thomassen's "permanentized" liminality, Rahner's "ascending" theology, and "Frei's Type 4" theological approach, I will lay out a framework for speaking in terms of interreligious theology where it specifically pertains to *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* and their implications for a Moltmannian notion of divine passibility.

Having established the ways in which a particular expression of Islam can be put into conversation with a particular expression of Christianity, and given that the former presents us with a liminal hero whose passion narrative can shed light on eternal economy, I will move to the analysis chapters that read the Ḥusayn story through a Moltmannian lens. First, though, it will be necessary to understand Moltmann's objection to strict divine impassibility.

Chapter III: Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?*: Jürgen Moltmann and Divine Passibility*

H.P. Owen defines theism as "belief in one God, the Creator, who is infinite, self-existent, incorporeal, eternal, immutable, impassible, simple, perfect, omniscient and

omnipotent."[112] This conception, while philosophically sound, takes little account for divine immanence, an immanence that is vital for understanding the relationship between God and a suffering world. Existentialists, liberationists, and panentheists choose to highlight immanence while still maintaining a commitment to transcendence. It is at the nexus of the two that Jürgen Moltmann's theology of the cross begins.

Moltmann's theological journey largely began in a prisoner of war camp during the Second World War. A Barthian by training, he has been writing for half a century on a wide variety of theological topics; for this dissertation the most germane of these is divine passibility. He most directly addresses this in his 1972 *The Crucified God*. This volume presents an understanding of God which might at first glance seem incompatible with normative Islamic doctrine or even Owen's aforementioned description. As Kevin J. Vanhoozer asks, "Does God suffer? No question penetrates to the theological joints and methodological marrow more effectively than this."[113] In Chapter III I will present a close reading of this seminal text, focusing specifically on the notion of divine passibility; the following three chapters will present the story of Ḥusayn's passion with the same focus. Chapter III will highlight the theological and existential influences that led Moltmann to his central thesis, that at the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth God the Father suffered. This then invites the question of whether God in Islam similarly experienced the pain of Ḥusayn's martyrdom. To this latter passion the dissertation will then turn.

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[112] H.P. Owen, *Concepts of Deity* cited in "Theological Conceptualization (Begriff): Varieties of Theism and Panentheism," in Vanhoozer, ed., *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 82.

[113] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Impassible Passion? Suffering, Emotions, and the Crucified God," in Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing,* 388.

Chapter IV: "A Poisoned Arrow with Three Heads": Liminal Passion

This chapter will present both the ʿAshurāʾ event and the *maqtal* genre. The partisans of ʿAlī's household, who memorialized the events and speeches surrounding Ḥusayn's death on the battlefield of Karbalāʾ, were greatly celebrated during the Abbasid caliphate, especially in *maqtal* texts. I will first introduce contemporary scholarship on the broad subject of *maqtal* literature. Only a handful of Western scholars have written about it; I will discuss these scholars and their works in this chapter.

Turning to the primary sources themselves, I will provide a rough sketch of Abbasid-era *maqātil* as a whole. I will introduce Günther's distinction between *maqtal* in general and *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* as a specific subgenre. Volumes in the former include narratives of the deaths of ʿAlī, his oldest son Ḥassan, ʿAlī's predecessor ʿUthmān, and even ʿAlī's companion Ḥujr ibn ʿAdī. These early *maqātil*, including those devoted to Ḥusayn, tend to revolve around a single martyred hero and those among his companions who died with him or were active in either mourning or avenging his death. I will describe the general structure of a *maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, which is typically laid out chronologically. After exploring the circumstances surrounding Ḥusayn's birth and youth (which include a variety of miracles similar to those which the Christian and Muslim traditions collocate with Christ's advent and early years), the *maqtal* moves to Ḥusayn's final weeks. Before the Battle of Karbalāʾ the works narrate the five journeys which Ḥusayn and his companions make as they journey toward Kūfa and finally are halted at Karbalāʾ. The involved companions and family members are listed in the events along the way, which include staying at the homes of righteous people, delivering speeches, and mourning Ḥusayn's impending death. Political maneuvering in the form of soliciting or offering fealty oaths is another common feature in the pre-Karbalāʾ sections. The most important people

involved in these narratives fall into eight categories. The involved members of *Ahl al-Bayt* (the household of the Prophet Muḥammad) comprise three of these: those killed in the battle, those taken prisoner, and those who though not present nevertheless advance Ḥusayn's story. Ḥusayn's companions fit into two camps: those killed in the battle, and those who participate in the immediate program of avenging Ḥusayn's death. Key players among the attacking forces fall into two categories: those who remain loyal to the caliph Yazīd I—and therefore antagonistic toward Ḥusayn's cohort—and those who, owing to piety, miracle, and Ḥusayn's virtuous example, come to sympathize with the enemy and defy Yazīd. The eighth category includes people who predeceased Ḥusayn but whose stories are integral parts of the Karbalāʾ saga.

Once the narrative reaches the plains of Karbalāʾ, the focus shifts to a combination of elegies and tactical maneuverings on the battlefield. Ḥusayn's ragtag army of less than a hundred is cut off from any fresh water supply (a theme which I analyze in the next section), and Yazīd's force of many tens of thousands is content for a few days to wait until thirst begins to consume the rebels' camp. The battle finally begins on the tenth day of the month of Muḥarram. This day is called ʿAshurāʾ, which is the Aramaic term for Yom Kippur (a fast day that Muḥammad observed) which is derived from a description in Leviticus 16:29. The *maqātil* enumerate countless significant events which happened on this day in the past, closely mirroring the Jewish tradition of dating most tragic events to a single fast day.[114] When the battle begins, the *maqātil* describe in great detail the wounding or killing of various members of Ḥusayn's camp, both family members and companions. The dénouement, Ḥusayn's death, is typically preceded by a graphic description of the slaughter of his infant son ʿAlī the Younger. At the massacre's

[114] In Judaism, however, tragic history is collectively mourned on the ninth day of the fifth month – Tishʿa b'Av – not the tenth day of the seventh month.

conclusion, the remaining women and children are taken prisoner to be paraded through the Levant along with Ḥusayn's dismembered head.

The aftermath of Karbalāʾ has implications that are as escatological as they are political. Some *maqātil* conclude with the events immediately following the battle, but many continue with a description of the vengeance which Ḥusayn's remaining allies exact against Karbalāʾ's victors. This is sometimes considered a separate *kitāb* (volume) or *juzʾ* (part); occasionally the plight of the prisoners and the revenge stories are contained in the same section. The vengeance, as David Pinault has shown, closely follows the Islamic model of *intiqām*, itself related to the pre-Islamic tribal vengeance known as *thāʾr*. A tension develops between this immediate, temporal, physical vengeance and the eschatological retribution found in the Twelver understanding of the *mahdī* (the Twelfth Imam, considered to be in occultation until Shīʿism has the opportunity for political ascendency). The dialectic between defeat and its eschatological reversal will have enormous implications for the question of suffering in Islam, which impacts the concept of divine impassibility. If defeat is only temporary (as in Twelver Islam) or a docetic figment (as in the neo-Platonic Sevener/ Ismāʿīlī sect of Shīʿism), then can it have anything to do with God's inner self? It is helpful to bring in insights from Moltmann to bear in contemplating this question: his insistence on an eternal dialectic between victory and defeat calls into question the extent to which these narrations of Ḥusayn's suffering represent his—or God's—atemporal qualities. In other words, do joy and sorrow continue perpetually or do they cease at the conclusion of the Ḥusayn saga? This chapter addresses this question.

Having given a synchronic account of Abbasid-era martyrologies of Ḥusayn I will next look at the *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* in four groups, outlining the chronological development of the genre. These are (1) early accounts, (2) late Abbasid martyrologies, (3) Safavid era

hagiographies, and (4) contemporary *maqātil*. I describe these stages in further detail in this chapter (IV), with a specific focus on the late-Abbasid development of the genre. I give a close reading of these texts in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter V: "Do Not Let Them Taste a Drop of It": The Paradigm of Liquids

The motif of liquids demonstrates, I will show, Ḥusayn's special relationship to both the human and the divine realms. A famous ḥadīth states that God loves two drops above all: "a tear shed due to fear of Allah, and a drop of blood spilled in the path of Allah." The motifs of tears and blood play a significant role in late-Abbasid Shīʿī *maqātil*, demonstrating that these liquids are signs of passion. There are also Sunnī texts in which tears and blood figure prominently as emblems of divine favor. In this chapter, I will focus on the relationship between Shīʿa memories of Ḥusayn and liquids, but I will also explore parallels in Sunnism so as to highlight the importance of this motif beyond Shīʿī texts alone. Further, Shīʿī rituals reflect a sense of the significance of these liquids: while grieving the paucity of water in Ḥusayn's ultimate days, the Shīʿite mourning of Muḥarram features more than a drop of these two fluids. Self-flagellation and heartfelt lamentation unite the community with its slain Imam. This chapter extends beyond the study of texts to consider briefly the significance of liquids as portrayed in Shīʿī communal rituals. All in all, this chapter explores ways that treatment of liquids in these various texts and practices conveys the redemptive role that suffering plays across Islamic confessional lines. I contend that the late-Abbasid *maqātil* are a prominent location of the development of this motif, but certainly not the only one.

The motifs of tears and blood in this chapter are heavily drawn from late-Abbasid Shīʿī *maqātil*. Still, it is helpful to note that they have analogues in the Sunnī world as well. In this

subsection I will focus on the relationship between Shīʿa memories of Ḥusayn and liquids, but will also note parallels in Sunnism so as to highlight the pan-Islamic nature of this motif. While grieving the paucity of water in Ḥusayn's ultimate days, the Shīʿite mourning of Muḥarram features more than a drop of these two fluids. Self-flagellation and heartfelt lamentation unite the community with its slain Imam. Yet the two-part suffering revolving around tears and bloodshed is not restricted to Twelver Shīʿism. This chapter will explore the redemptive role that suffering plays across Islamic confessional lines, though focusing on the *maqtal* descriptions of Ḥusayn's languishment. To that end, it will explore the themes of shedding tears and shedding blood, as well as the desperation of thirst.

First Drop: Tears

Gandhi remarked (likely apocryphally), "I learnt from Hussain how to attain victory while being oppressed." The dialectic between suffering and salvation in the liminal figure of Ḥusayn may be one of the strongest paradigms Islam has for challenging divine impassibility. A particular motif—the relationship between humanity and liquids—encapsulates the *maqtal* view of suffering. The Karbalāʾ story in a sense revolves around fluids. One (drinking water) is absent, while two others (tears and blood) abound. This section of the chapter does a close reading of the way that holy tears fit into the concept of liminal, righteous suffering.

This section of the chapter looks at another incarnation of how tears fit into Islamic piety more broadly. The Prophet's tears are a popular motif among contemporary Muslims. Traditions report that he cried in a number of circumstances related to his prophetic vocation and his nascent community. Several stories that appear on the surface to be quite antagonistic toward women concern the Prophet's frustration with women who attempt to shame men when the latter

cry out of religious zeal. I will turn to the tears of the Prophet's companions (especially Abū Bakr).[115] The early Islamic community deliberated whether tears in public were mandatory or even permissible. While public wailing has been part of the Shīʿī tradition from a very early date, Sunnism has had a more ambivalent attitude toward public displays of grief. Recently, however, narratives of the Prophet's tears have resurfaced in Sunnī popular culture. I will suggest that grief is an integral dimension of Sunnī suffering and that the liminal heroes of the Sunnī tradition were neither ashamed to cry nor able to stifle their tears.

Second Drop: Blood

Martyrdom is a rich concept in both Sunnī and Shīʿī theologies—blood shed in a righteous path has cosmic significance. This is important because it allows this project to have implications beyond Twelver Shīʿism. While death in the way of God is on one hand a cause for celebration—it ensures the martyr a happy hereafter—it nevertheless moves the deceased's companions to tears. A common belief, held by David Cook and others, is that Sunnī martyrdom is an occasion for joy while Shīʿī martyrdom is an occasion for grief. I will nuance this generalization by showing that early Muslims, including the Prophet, experienced ambivalent emotions upon the deaths of their confreres. In a scene reminiscent of Jesus weeping over Lazarus's passing, Muḥammad is reported to have been reduced to uncontrollable sobbing after three of his companions were killed in a bloody battle.[116] Martyrdom is not only something

[115] The work of Leor Halevi, though not particularly germane to this dissertation, is especially useful in discussions of the tears of mourners in funerary rites.

[116] Muhammad Mohee Uddin, *Sahih al-Bukhari: (All Volumes in One Book)* (New York: Waterstones, 2020), vol. 2, bk. 23, no. 338: "The Prophet said, 'Zaid took over the flag and was martyred. Then it was taken by Jafar who was martyred as well. Then 'Abdullah bin Rawaha took the flag but he too was martyred and at that time the eyes of Allah's Apostle were full of tears.'"

glorious to be sought and celebrated; it is also a moment of extreme suffering and the occasion for deep grief. Descriptions of bloodshed feature prominently in the *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*.

Martyrdom is a wider concept than mere death on the battlefield of a holy war. The Arabic term for a martyr, *shahīd*, literally means a witness or one who testifies. According to some jurists, a violent death is therefore not a strict prerequisite for martyrdom. Cook notes "after the martyrdom of ʿUthmān [in 656], Sunnis as a group have only very rarely been oppressed enough to create large groups of martyrs."[117] The paucity of bona fide martyred heroes has led to a broadening of the concept to include anyone who suffered for upholding the faith. Chief among these for Cook is the ninth century scholar Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal who is the namesake for one of the most influential schools of law in the Islamic world. During an inquisition called the *Miḥna*, Ibn Ḥanbal endured years of imprisonment and torture as the result of his pious theological convictions. I suggest a hagiographical reflection on the suffering of Imam ibn Ḥanbal, showing that the suffering of this religious hero satisfies the conditions of Sunnī martyrology. This involves a focus on the trilateral root *ṣ-b-r* in Sunnī and Shīʿī contexts, which I will invoke in the concluding chapter as an area for further exploration on the relationship between longsuffering and the holy.

Chapter VI – "That Which Hurts Fāṭima…Hurts Allāh": Divine Passibility in Maqātil Literature

This chapter examines the interaction between liminality and passibility in not just Ḥusayn but in beings ranging from the non-sentient to the divine, providing a bridge for conversation with Moltmannian patripassianism. It continues the theme of seeing Ḥusayn as a

[117] David Cook, *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 50.

liminal hero and observes how the cataclysmic event of his slaying reverberates eternally and forever alters the fabric of the heavenly realm.

Ḥusayn's Radical Humanity

As I demonstrate in Chapter V, liquids constitute a motif in which arch humanity and divine favor are simultaneously manifest. Ḥusayn therefore becomes what I describe in Chapter II as a "liminal hero." There are other "straddling" dimensions to Ḥusayn's status; I explore them in Chapter VI. As important as it is for me to show that Ḥusayn has one foot on the divine side of the chasm between heaven and earth, to prove his liminality I must also demonstrate his humanity. His demise was anguished, bloody, and humiliating. Abbasid-era *maqātil* paint a graphic picture of the events at Karbalāʾ. They give a thick description of the wounds, thirst, grief, and injustice that Ḥusayn's camp suffered, laboring over the smallest details of Ḥusayn's passion. In his physical and emotional anguish Ḥusayn shares the suffering of all people. The comparativist scholar Mahmoud Ayoub writes, "Suffering, according to this tradition, must accompany divine favor and high status with God, not only for the martyrs themselves but also for all those who choose to share their lot. With the Great Martyr, they will enter into the House of Sorrows, which becomes a bridge to paradise."[118] I will focus on five aspects of Ḥusayn's humanity in this section: his piety, his gentleness, his thirst, his tears, and the love he shows to his infant son before and after the latter's slaying. While the divine might share these properties with humanity, I contend that they are basic to the human realm. In showing these qualities, I will suggest that Ḥusayn's radical humanity makes him an ideal candidate to serve as a "bridge to paradise."

[118] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 39.

Even the earliest accounts celebrate Ḥusayn's humility and virtue. For instance, Twelver tradition holds that he was in Mecca performing the Ḥajj when Yazīd signed his death warrant. Rather than allow his blood to be spilled in the holy city, thus defiling the sanctuary, Ḥusayn elected not to complete his pilgrimage rites—he preferred to be killed in a place which would not bring dishonor to Islam. Ḥusayn's gentleness is seen throughout his time in Karbalāʾ, and the mercy he shows both to his enemies and to the women and children of his own camp is exemplary. Thirst and tears are the dominant motifs in *maqtal* literature; these fully display his humanity. Finally, I will discuss the special bond between Ḥusayn and his six-month-old son ʿAlī the Younger. In the midst of the battle Ḥusayn retrieved ʿAlī from the women's tent and held him aloft to show his enemies the inhumanity of their bloodlust. Yazīd's forces responded by riddling ʿAlī with arrows. As Ḥusayn dug the tiny grave for this innocent victim, his tears mingled with ʿAlī's blood, providing an ultra-human moment in the midst of an inhumane battle. Yet this Imam is more than a mere mortal: his passion on earth reverberates in heaven.

Ḥusayn's Quasi-Divinity

As important as it is to establish Ḥusayn's complete humanity, to count him as a liminal hero he must also have extra-human qualities. A Twelver tradition claims that heaven and earth have wept twice: once at John the Baptist's execution and once at Ḥusayn's martyrdom. According to *maqtal* texts, angels also cry uncontrollably at Ḥusayn's death, as do prophets, saints, Imams, and even the non-sentient creation. For the Twelver community the Qurʾān, too, foresees the injustice of Karbalāʾ. In short, every earthly sign by which people can know God is distraught over Ḥusayn's suffering. God as present to creation suffers *with* Ḥusayn in a perfect display of compassion. For his part, Ḥusayn shares the liminal space occupied by these *ayat Allāh* (signs of God, whence comes the Shīʿite title Ayatollah).

Ḥusayn's lofty status is seen most at the borders of his life: prior to and at his birth; at and after his death. His sacrifice at Karbalāʾ is foretold by prophets and saints, who almost without exception are reduced to tears when they envision his demise. In both womb and cradle Ḥusayn's genesis is spectacular, paralleling stories from both the New Testament and the Qurʾān about Jesus and John the Baptist. His mother, Fāṭima, assumes the role of Mary, a virtuous and chaste (*batūl*) woman who feels more acutely than anyone the sting of her son's impending death. Ḥusayn's end mirrors the gospels' account of Jesus', which is remarkable considering the ends to which many Twelver scholars go to discount the historicity of the crucifixion. A tradition arose that a companion named Hanẓala ibn Saʿd bore Ḥusayn's likeness and died in his place early in the battle, mirroring the longstanding Islamic tradition that a Jesus lookalike suffered on the cross. Ḥusayn is not a recapitulation of Christ so much as Christ is an implicit type of Ḥusayn. The abovementioned anguish, thirst, and sense of betrayal accompany both the Christian Jesus and the Ḥusayn of *maqtal* literature. Major figures in the Ḥusayn drama play similar roles to those in the story of Jesus' passion. Saʿid al-Ḥanafi carries Ḥusayn's figurative cross as a type of Simon of Cyrene. Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan, a companion of Ḥusayn's father, resembles Judas as he betrays the family and accepts a sum of money for turning Ḥusayn over to the executioner. Al-Ḥurr, the military commander tasked with carrying out this execution, comes to believe Ḥusayn to be righteous and exonerates him as Pilate had done to Jesus. The anxieties of Gethsemane are closely paralleled down to intricate details, as of course is the thirst motif. Angels stand at the ready, holding flaming swords, prepared to vanquish Ḥusayn's enemies should he want it. Ḥusayn has a vision in which Muḥammad tells him that the two will soon feast together in paradise. Portents in creation accompany his death, and significant miracles occur on

both the third and fortieth days thereafter. Finally, as Ayoub convincingly demonstrates, it is through Ḥusayn's martyrdom that the Islamic community is redeemed.[119]

In addition to the unmistakable parallels to Jesus (as well as such liminal figures as Job and Moses), the *maqātil* hint at Ḥusayn's quasi-divinity in at least four other ways. First, he is a miracle worker throughout his life; even after death his severed head continues to recite verses from the Qurʾān for weeks. Second, he has, and is the subject of, various dreams and visions through which prophets, companions, enemies, and even animals receive confirmation of his mission. Third, his death is to be avenged eschatologically at the return of the twelfth Imam from occultation: while there is a measured level of proximate vengeance (*intiqām*), his full vindication will come directly from God. Fourth, Ḥusayn possesses a set of eternal qualities: from eternity past he fully embodies the divine Light (a concept that Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq extends beyond Muḥammad to the Imams, including Ḥusayn who is said to be a permanent Imam), and until eternity to come his martyrdom seals him as the chief intercessor (possibly alongside Muḥammad and ʿAlī) between God and humanity.[120] In short, Ḥusayn is unique among those born of women, and his full humanity is tethered to a form of divinity. For the *maqtal* authors, Ḥusayn occupies a liminal space between heaven and earth.

[119] This dissertation takes very seriously the work of Mahmoud Ayoub, especially his 1978 *Redemptive Suffering in Islam*. Yet it diverges from Ayoub's work in its Ḥusaynid focus. Ayoub looks at the salvific role that Ḥusayn plays for the Shīʿa through his passion; I look instead at implications that the passion has for a doctrine of God. I cite Ayoub extensively but this dissertation is not an attempt to replicate his project.

[120] "God is the light of the heavens and the earth; the likeness of His light is as a niche, that niche is Fatima, wherein is a lamp, that is al-Hasan and al-Husayn…" Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in Mir CC Khan, "'Chirāgh-i Rōshan': Prophetic Light in the Ismā'īlī Tradition," *Islamic Studies*, vol. 52, no. 3/4, Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University (2013), 336.

Karbalāʾ as a Bridge between Realms

As depicted in the *maqātil,* Ḥusayn and the fields of Karbalāʾ are linked both historically and eschatologically. His spilt blood is often anthropomorphized, like Abel's in Genesis. But unlike Abel, Ḥusayn's blood is preexistent, crying out to prophets like Adam, Jesus, and Muḥammad. A common motif in the *maqtal* material involves a prophet walking through Karbalāʾ flanked by disciples. The soil that will one day be soaked in Ḥusayn's blood foretells the battle's tragic outcome to the prophet, who immediately breaks down in tears. This scene typically takes place on the day of ʿAshurāʾ. Both the place (Karbalāʾ) and the date (the tenth of Muḥarram) are liminal spaces in which the membrane between divinity and humanity is very thin. The soil, trees, and gazelles anticipate Ḥusayn's martyrdom from the beginning and testify to it until the end. In a sense, the surest way to approach God is through Ḥusayn's passion. Ḥusayn's spilt blood transforms Karbalāʾ into a portal through which creatures experience the Creator, a God seen most fully in the suffering of Muḥammad's elect grandson.

Passibility beyond Ḥusayn

The *maqātil* vividly describe the grief and suffering that Prophets, Imams, animals, jinn, angels—indeed, the whole created realm—experience given their realization of Ḥusayn's death. This section of the chapter gives examples of all of these. Additionally, it describes five dimensions of passibility: passion, suffering, temporality, deference, and partisanship, and gives examples of God being touched by these marks. It concludes that the cosmic realm, including Godself, is passible. This section builds on previous ones to make a culminating argument—the God of Ḥusayn shares in the suffering of the Prophet's grandson.

Chapter VII: Conclusion: Assessment and Areas for Further Study

The foregoing chapters have highlighted aspects of Moltmann's theology and the theology that emerges from the *maqtal* texts that, taken together, resonate with one another in interesting ways and often echo one another's ideas about divine passibility. This concluding chapter will build on the previous ones finally to draw together the discussions of Moltmann and the *maqātil* to examine the degree to which a *maqtal*-derived theology is compatible with one based in Moltmann. It will also look briefly at Sunnī, contemporary, and political analogues to this theology, identifying directions for future study and pointing outward at the wider presence of these ideas about God within Islamic thought. The chapters above highlight the similarities between Moltmann-based and *maqtal*-based theology. In addressing directly the degree to which the *maqtal* texts provide a semiotic or morphological correlate to Moltmann's *theologia crucis*, this concluding chapter also evaluates the extent to which this resonance can be useful for broader theological dialogue between Christianity and Islam. This chapter will also address some key questions that come up in drawing together Moltmann and the *maqātil* directly. I will analyze two aspects of Moltmannian theology in light of the three *maqtal* analysis chapters: patripassianism and the particularity of the Christ event. As I have shown, Moltmann challenges the Chalcedonian distinctions which lead to divine apathy. He rejects Scholastic impassibility in favor of a covenant theology rooted in Hebrew narrative and the Church's experience of the cross. The human nature of Jesus of Nazareth is not the cross's only victim, and even the Father suffers from the forsakenness of the Son: "On the cross not only is Jesus himself in agony, but also the one for whom he lived and spoke, his Father."[121] This dissertation does not aim to establish Ḥusayn as an Islamic "second Person of the Trinity;" there remains a distinction

[121] Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 220.

between the suffering of a liminal hero (Ḥusayn) and the affectedness of God in God's immanent self. Yet I contend that this distinction is more academic (theosophical) than experiential (existential) and that if theology from below is an access point into God's self-contained nature, Ḥusayn's suffering might be said to be projected onto the heavens.

Several areas for further exploration remain, and this chapter will identify some that arise from this study. How closely are strands of Sunnī theology analogous to that which emerges from a close reading of the *maqātil*? What has the further evolution of the *maqtal* genre meant for divine passibility in the modern age? What are the social and political implications of a passible Islamic deity? The existential and political dimensions of the two theologies (Moltmann's and that of the *maqātil*) may turn out to be their closest point of contact. Ultimately Moltmann's observation in *The Crucified God* can resonate with one who reads in Ḥusayn's martyrdom the liberation of the downtrodden:

> The crucified God is in fact a stateless and classless God. But that does not mean that he is an unpolitical God. He is the God of the poor, the oppressed and the humiliated. The rule of Christ who was crucified for political reasons can only be extended through liberation from forms of rule which make men servile and apathetic and the political religions which give them stability.[122]

This political dialectic must not be lost on those seeking to further Christian-Muslim theological dialogue. Ḥusayn achieved spiritual victory through physical defeat. In the suffering of this liminal hero we uncover much more—a God who is cosmically passible.

[122] Ibid, 329.

Chapter II: Methodology

This chapter explains the methodologies employed in this dissertation. It lays out first the concepts of theology from below, drawing on the thought of Karl Rahner and his *Grundaxiom*, and narrative theology, building on the work of Hans Frei. Next it presents the liminal hero, considering the work of Bjørn Thomassen and others. Third, it makes a case for the concept of the interpreter as a melder of textual horizons, integrating the ideas of several key thinkers who contributed to the linguistic turn in Western twentieth century philosophy. Specifically, in the service of developing the idea of the interpreter as a melder of horizons, a *Horizontverschmelzer*, I outline the arguments of five contributors to the linguistic turn in the philosophy of language: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Clifford Geertz, Gilbert Ryle, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Jacques Derrida. This third section is vital because as someone who stands outside of the Twelver Shīʿa tradition I must consider critically my positionality and what it is that I am doing when I approach these texts and interpret them. As I will discuss, I am influenced by thinkers who suggest that the reader always approaches and understands a text through the lens of her own worldview and context—in Wittgenstein's terms, her own tradition's "language."

As stated, this chapter begins by exploring the concepts of "narrative theology" and "theology from below," which I incorporate into my theological method. Next, I define what I call a "liminal hero," derived from my adaptation of the cultural-anthropological concept of liminality. Merging the claims of these two sections allows me to argue, as I will demonstrate, that the suffering of a liminal hero has repercussions for divine passibility (subjectivity to change). In an approach to theology that starts with human experience and narrative rather than philosophical deduction, the divine is seen in the liminal human. These three concepts—narrative theology, theology from below, and the liminal hero—are important notions for reading the

maqātil: these narrative texts describe Ḥusayn as elevated in the heavenly realm yet subject to extreme human suffering and emotion; as a genre, they tell a series of stories from an earthly vantage point that points toward the cosmic. In reading these texts, I aim to be conscious of the horizons of understanding—and the limits of these horizons—that I bring to my comprehension and interpretation of them; the thought developed by the key scholars that this chapter discusses provides me with a critical and robust framework for doing so. With this issue in mind, the chapter finishes by addressing one of the key questions of interreligious dialogue: how can one talk competently about a tradition that is not one's own?

To address this question, I deal with a number issues affecting interreligious dialogue in a world shaped by the linguistic turn. These issues include truth, understanding, meaning, religion, and scripture. How do we understand one another if we speak and think in the "language" of our own particular tradition? How can meaning be derived from a text? What makes a text "sacred?" To answer these questions, I invoke the five abovementioned scholars who contributed or responded to the "linguistic turn" in twentieth century Western thought. Following Wittgenstein, I appropriate the twin concepts of cultural linguistics and language games. Ryle introduces a number of ideas, most notably for this study implication threads, cartography, and thick description. Geertz further develops thick description and applies it to the social sciences. Gadamer's notion of the fusion of horizons contributes to the intelligibility of meaning, a concept against which Derrida provides a refreshing push.

I work with Derrida's critique of intelligibility during the course of this chapter in order to demonstrate the viability of this project and the hermeneutical lens through which I am approaching it. Responding to the problem of the language of interreligious dialogue, I argue that one can establish the possibility of mutual intelligibility in the case of Moltmann and *maqātil*

authors (or at least their texts) on the subject of divine passibility. I do so by drawing on theology from below, narrative theology, liminality, and the fuser of horizons.

Theological Method

Theology from Below[123]

In Ḥusayn's earthly passion the *maqtal* writers saw something of the transcendent; a doctrine of God that accounts for the Imam's liminal experience of suffering relies on a key theological hermeneutic: theology from below. The transcendental Thomist Karl Rahner (1904-84) was instrumental in developing this concept (called "ascending theology") that will be central to this study. For him, "The only starting point for developing a theology of an immanent Trinity is not some speculative analogy, psychological or metaphysical, but our historical experiences of God the Father as manifested in the twofold modality of Word and Spirit."[124] Any theology of immanence must begin with existential encounter rather than with philosophical system.[125] Yet that encounter is not divorced from a descending theology from above, for God is the same in God's inner life as God is in human experience. Rahner's monumental *Grundaxiom* affirms this:

> There *must* be a connection between Trinity and man. The Trinity is a mystery of *salvation*, otherwise it would never have been revealed…The *basic thesis* which establishes this connection between the treatises and presents the Trinity *as* a mystery of salvation…might be formulated as follows: *The "economic" Trinity is the "immanent" Trinity and the "immanent" Trinity is the "economic" Trinity*.[126]

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[123] Some of the material in this section is taken from my article in the *Journal of Comparative Islamic Studies* vol. 9.2, "'The Final Word'? The Qurʾan and Karl Rahner in Dialogue." Equinox Publishing Ltd. (2016): 195-234.

[124] Peter Phan. "Mystery of Grace and Salvation: Karl Rahner's Theology of the Trinity" in Peter, Phan, *ed. The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 201.

[125] For resistance to philosophical systems by Karl Barth and George Hunsinger, cf. Jason A. Springs, *Toward a Generous Orthodoxy: Prospects for Hans Frei's Postliberal Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010), 74.

[126] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*. Joseph Donceel, *trans.* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 21f.

In equating the economic and immanent Trinities, Rahner opens space for a theology that starts with human worldly experience. Never does Rahner reject a theology from above; rather, he simply shifts the emphasis to a theology from below and locates his transcendental theology and the hypostatic union in the intersection between the two.[127] The nature of Jesus is resolved through understanding the Christ event from both directions:

> Ascending Christology is able to reach a Christology of eternal and divine Sonship…There is no contradiction between the two Christologies…In the man Jesus of Nazareth, God affirmed the complete and unsurpassable response to the divine self-communication. Jesus, who enjoyed a hypostatic union with the divine Word, mediates salvation in a complete and unsurpassable way.[128]

The logic of Rahner's preference for the ascending while maintaining the integrity of the descending is vital for a comprehensive reading of the Ḥusayn drama. We learn about God through Ḥusayn's experiences, both on earth and in heaven. While there is no direct equivalent to the hypostatic union, Ḥusayn as a liminal hero straddles the human and divine realms. This study asserts that the cosmic dimension can be glimpsed through the *maqātil*'s description of Ḥusayn's passion and eternal triumph. In his full humanity he teaches us something about divinity. His experience of God's solidarity with him in his struggle is a powerful pointer to the divine inner life. I read the late Abbasid texts through the lens of an ascending theology and provide a bridge for conversation with Moltmannian theopassianism (divine subjectivity to change).

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[127] "Descending Christology begins with the assertion that 'God in his Logos became man.' Implicit in this is the doctrine of the Trinity. The Logos is 'born of' and 'expressed by' the Father in an eternal 'generation.' The Logos assumed a complete human nature in a union called 'hypostatic'…Although the human and divine natures exist in a single hypostasis, nevertheless the two natures differ." Karl Rahner *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, *trans*. William V. Dych (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1978), 286.

[128] Mark F. Fisher, *The Foundations of Karl Rahner: A Paraphrase of the* Foundations of Christian Faith, *With Introduction and Indices* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005), 109; cf. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 1978, 301; for the correspondence between "existential" Christology from below and "theological" Christology from above, cf. Roman A. Siebenrock. "Christology," in Marmion, Declan and Mary E. Hines, *eds. The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 117.

Narrative vs. Systematic Theology

My reading of Ḥusayn as a liminal figure fit for dialogue with Christian discussions of divine passibility entails a narrativist approach to theology. According to such an approach, truth and meaning are found principally in the story rather than in a philosophical system. That is not to say that the narrative is logically inconsistent, but rather that narrative is the primary driver of theological truth claims. The postliberal theologian William Placher, following George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine*, describes,

> […] a 'cultural-linguistic' way of interpreting religious doctrines, one in which their meaning was their use as rules in the life of a religious community. The biblical narratives 'absorb the world' by providing and illustrating the language within which it is possible to live as a Christian.[129]

This approach takes narratives as illustrative of what it means to be a Christian, and their language as providing a thick description of this way of being.

A useful framework for thinking about the relationship between narrative and philosophy comes from Hans Frei's fivefold typology of Christian theologies. He associates each one with a primary thinker and frames them in terms of their ability to converse with the external. These types form a spectrum aligned according to how much each one relies on philosophical system and the degree to which such reliance helps or hinders meaningful interfaith dialogue. Type I holds that "…theology as a philosophical discipline...is at least potentially universal as part of a

[129] William Placher in Hans Frei, *Types of Christian Theology* ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 19.

quest for ultimate meaning, in the articulation of which the concepts 'world' and 'God' are correlative."[130] At the other end, in Type V,

> Christianity is one…language game, it has its own integrity, and you should not judge it by the rules of other games any more than you would apply the rules of chess to tennis. Therefore it cannot be adequately explained or understood in terms of other language games such as atheist materialism or Islam or secular feminism. The task of theology is to make clear what sort of 'game' Christianity is and to draw the consequences for living within it.[131]

Abutting Type V is Type IV, which most accurately depicts the type of narrative theology that undergirds this dissertation. Type IV, "…is 'faith seeking understanding', basically trusting the main lines of classic Christian testimony to God and the Gospel, but also entering into a wide range of dialogues."[132] Here as well the Christian *story* drives the theological search for truth: George Haunsinger and Placher note that, "Frei protests against any conceptual devices—whether they be ambitious philosophical 'systems' or Kierkegaardian resorts to 'paradox'—that threaten to overwhelm the narratives."[133] Frei contrasts narrative theology with "natural theology," epistemology, and historical literalism.[134] The biblical narrative is the paradigm for both belief and behavior:

> The practices constitutive of Christian forms of life...coalesce and take shape around the distinctive claims made by God's revelation in Scripture. The world portrayed in the Bible both make claims about what the world is really like (a model *of*) as well as claims about how Christians ought to go about being in such a world (a model *for*)...These stories make sense of the things that happen to believers by providing "spectacles, the lens, through which faith views all reality."[135]

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[130] Frei, *Types*, 28.

[131] David Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 203), 25.

[132] Ibid, 29; for a Barthian analogue, cf. Springs, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 75.

[133] Hans Frei, *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 45.

[134] Ibid, 210f.

[135] Springs, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 66.

The key difference between Type IV and Type V lies in the ability to interact intelligibly with other faith traditions. While in Type V Christianity is a closed language game that precludes interreligious dialogue, in Type IV the possibility for meaningful conversation exists. I intend in this chapter to establish that possibility in the conversation between the *maqātil* and Moltmann's writing using Type IV narrative theology from below to exegete the texts' portrayal of liminal heroes.

Frei prioritizes the story rather than the system as the source of truth. He writes that, "…religions are specific symbol systems and not a single, high-culture reproduction of symbol-neutral eternal 'truth.'"[136] To demonstrate the primacy of narrative, he offers the following:

> We simply do not know, for example, *how* the principle of noncontradiction applies to the doctrine of the incarnation, but we believe that since it does for God (who has neither created an irrational universe nor redeemed it irrationally), we need not resort to evasive substitute and general categories such as "paradox."[137]

For Frei, in this example, we need not give a philosophical explanation to affirm the narrative claim that God assumed human flesh. The Incarnation is local to the Christian story and is therefore true for Christianity. Placher writes, "Respect the local, mistrust the universal, [Frei] would have said. Let the character of these particular texts shape the way we understand them rather than letting a general theory limit our way of interpreting them in advance. Such suspicion of general theory was basic to Frei's position."[138] It is precisely in this "local" that we find in the *maqātil* narratives of Ḥusayn's martyrdom: they stand on their own without needing to fit a larger philosophical schema. Yet because they are part of the Shīʿa canon, their voice contributes

[136] Frei, *Theology and Narrative*, 148.
[137] Ibid, 196.
[138] Placher in Ibid, 16.

to a Twelver Shīʿa worldview.[139] It is not necessary for all of Islam to reject divine impassibility for the Ḥusaynid martyrologies to challenge it. In other words, minority voices, like those of the *maqtal* writers, carry immense weight and deserve to be analyzed in their own contexts and genres. Theological meaning emerges when the texts are read through the hermeneutical lens I am proposing in this methodology—in *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*, the meaning is located primarily in the story, not the system.

Liminality and the Liminal Hero

This section defines a "liminal hero" and argues that Ḥusayn meets the criteria for being one. Two major figures represented the cultural-anthropological study of liminality: Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) and Victor Turner (1920-83). For Van Gennep a "liminal period" is "the middle stage in a rite of passage."[140] Such rites include rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation, and the experience thereof engenders discomfort and anxiety.[141] Liminality is found at the threshold between two states of being. In his 1909 opus *Les Rites de Passage* Van Gennep examines transitional moments in the human life-cycle including, "pregnancy, birth, initiation, marriage, [and] funeral."[142] Claude Levi-Strauss deserves credit for rediscovering Van Gennep's method, but subsequent scholars critiqued Levi-Strauss' structuralism as being too rigid to account for the unfolding nature of "social dramas;" Turner saw this shortcoming and in recovering Van Gennep's notion of liminality greatly developed

[139] Here I use "canon" in a general sense: the *maqātil* have no such official status as authoritative sources of doctrine and law. They are, however, part of the ʿAshurāʾ drama that is near the center of Twelver devotional life.
[140] Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living through the In-Between* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 37.
[141] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960), 11.
[142] Ibid, 37.

it.[143] Religious experience in particular came to occupy a central space in scholarly study of liminality. Later, in the 2010s, the Danish social scientist Bjørn Thomassen developed of the concept of liminality to describe a perpetual state of being. For him, the threshold is a place of stasis, and the ambiguity and anxiety of the liminal moment stretch on. He borrows from Max Weber's notion of the "routinization" of charismatic authority to describe the "permanentization" of the liminal experience that is modernity.[144] Following Árpád Szakolczai, Thomassen develops the concept of "permanent liminality." The liminal is for this dissertation no longer a moment but a state of being in between.

This conception of liminality, I suggest, can be applied theologically to the case of the liminal hero who forever occupies two seemingly separate domains. Even specific moments, such as the Karbalāʾ saga and the earthly life of Ḥusayn, stretch on through their enshrinement in religious practices and texts that remain central to the Shīʿī community, as well as eschatologically in the cosmic drama of the hereafter. The Karbalāʾ moment permanentizes in the drama of ritualized Shīʿa life. ʿAshurāʾ (the day of Ḥusayn's death) is formative for the devotee and contributes heavily to her hermeneutical lens, affecting her identity and approach to life. I contend that Ḥusayn is an example of a permanentized liminal hero, someone who perpetually straddles the human and divine realms with all the inherent anxiety, potentiality, and transcendence that accompany such a position. The liminal hero need not be a demigod, nor conform to a defined theological principle such as a hypostatic union. Rather, this hero functions as a threshold between the profane and the sacred, the earthly and the heavenly, the temporal and

[143] Ibid, 75.
[144] Ibid, 14.

the eternal.[145] Precisely because of his earthly passion experience, Ḥusayn comes to occupy a permanentized liminal space that stretches eternally, offering what Mahmoud Ayoub calls "redemption" to the devoted community, which is linked to God through the slain Imam.[146] Ḥusayn's sacrifice opens a permanent and salvific breach in the membrane between heaven and earth for his partisans. This project contends that the Ḥusayn of human experience is permanently identical to the Ḥusayn of cosmic loft, and as such can shed light on the divine economy, the way God functions within Godself. Here Karl Rahner's *Grundaxiom* will be helpful in developing a "theology from below" that preferences such human experience over "top-down" philosophical systems in attempting to comprehend the divine nature.[147] I now explore the concept of intelligible meaning.

The Linguistic Turn

Theology is the grammar of the word 'God.'
– Ludwig Wittgenstein[148]

Theology after Wittgenstein

Having defined the categories "theology from below," "narrative theology," and "liminal hero," we now turn to another central component of the heuristic for this project. The last century has seen questions of meaning—what it is, where it lies, how to communicate it—come to the fore in Western linguistic philosophy. Scholars have challenged claims to objective truth and the

[145] For the notion of a boundary between sacred and profane, see Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. W.R. Trask (Eugene, OR: Harvest/HBJ Publishers, 1957); Eliade is here indebted to Durkheim.
[146] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 197.
[147] Rahner, *Trinity*, 21f.
[148] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1932*, ed. Desmond Lee (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1980), 32.

accurate transmission of such truth between parties. In the following section I undertake a detailed answer to the question of meaning, culminating with the fourth methodological tool necessary for reading the *maqātil* through the lens of divine passibility: "the fuser of horizons." The work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is vital at this point.

Wittgenstein was a philosopher of language whose later work focused on the grammar of human experience that began in what Richard Rorty has called the "linguistic turn."[149] Thus, for Wittgenstein, theology is a matter of grammar, a set of rules by which the word "God" functions. This is a very different approach to theology than that of the Scholastics and metaphysicians who preceded Hume and Kant. Wittgenstein reflects a shift in the epistemology of meaning that has rendered "truth" much more elusive than previously thought. At the same time, some have argued, this shift has challenged the universalist assumptions that led the Christian West to dominate the world through colonialism, imperialism, and their correlates.[150] Modernity has yielded to something loosely called "postmodernity," and the linguistic philosophers who helped shape this paradigm shift provide both a challenge to and a reconceptualization of comparative religious studies, a field that was initially under the umbrella of *Religionswissenschaft*.

The remainder of this section on the linguistic turn will consist of three parts. First, it will establish the problems of meaning, understanding, communication, and truth in linguistic philosophy, showing how the five thinkers of interest have contributed to this problematization. Second, it will explore what resources the linguistic turn (and its descendent, the poststructuralist turn) offers for the communication of meaning that takes serious account of particularity,

[149] Richard Rorty, *ed*, *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method with Two Retrospective Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 371.
[150] Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 39.

pluralism, and subjectivity. Third, it will suggest a two-part methodology for uncovering the meaning found in the conversation between adherents to two religious texts, centered around the concept of a "fuser of horizons."[151] This methodology involves a scholar reading and engaging with texts attentively and closely, so that this scholar might function as a horizon fuser, relaying the interpretation of the intersection between the texts. This dissertation involves the fusing of horizons in order to communicate with both the coincidence of the texts and my readership, and therefore requires a degree of proficiency in both cultural languages. Far from being a passive audience, the scholar does the interpretive work of putting the texts into conversation and synthesizing their ideas, then explaining the fruits of this textual conversation for other readers. The scholar's own situatedness necessarily plays a role in shaping this synthesis and the meanings that she sees when putting the texts into conversation.

Meaning and Communication in the Linguistic Turn

Meaning, communication, understanding, and truth all take on special significance in the linguistic turn. "Meaning" is a contested term rendered problematic by the larger postmodern movement. Along with Wittgenstein, four other twentieth century thinkers' work offers a new methodology for the comparison of religious texts that takes seriously the particularity of truth claims while recognizing their embeddedness in cultural grammar. One of Wittgenstein's earliest successors, Gilbert Ryle (1900-76) staunchly criticized Enlightenment assumptions derived from

[151] In addition to a fuser of horizons, I suggest that the reader can be described as a "scribe." The scribe moderates a conversation between texts. I mean that a reader of two texts can translate them into a common idiom, allowing them to "speak" to one another with the scribe "listening in." I have chosen the term "scribe" intentionally because historical criticism has shown that ancient scribes were fallible. Scribal errors, interpolations, sloppy handwriting, and redactions (whether well-intentioned or nefarious) are not normative but they are possible, so the transmission of a text will reflect something of the scribe's prejudice. The antidote to scribal error is immersion in the worlds of both the data and the readership.

the "official doctrine" of René Descartes's dualism.[152] His holistic approach to a philosophy of mind included a demonstration of how language functions not as something precise but as something complex. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) appropriated Ryle's notion of "thick description" to suggest an ethnographic way forward beyond the (sometimes blindly) hegemonic history of cultural studies. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) focused on hermeneutics, questioning the modernist assumption of objectivity and showing how meaning actually emerges from the prejudices (that is, the prior hermeneutical situatedness) of conversation partners.[153] Gadamerian conversation is between two "horizons" of meaning, fields of view emerging from one's "situation."[154] I borrow the term "fuser of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzer*) from Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*).[155] Questioning Gadamer's optimism about the intelligibility of meaning, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) developed deconstruction, according to which the pursuit of pure meaning is an endless chase. While these five thinkers focused on aspects of language, culture, and interpretation at large, I read them together to suggest a paradigm for comparative theology.

Two points must be made at this juncture: first, the proposed methodology depends on the use of contested terms; second, the five thinkers do not share identical concepts of how language functions. Though the idea of the fuser of horizons rests on the insights of those who caution against the hasty use of language, it will use—as consistently as possible—three problematic terms: religion, linguistic philosophy, and postmodernity. "Religion" is a heavily

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[152] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 15f.

[153] Cf. Jeff Malpas. "Hans-Georg Gadamer," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/gadamer/.

[154] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004), 302.

[155] I borrow the term *Horizontverschmelzer*, based on Gadamer's *Horizontverschmelzung*, from Klaas Huizing's. *Gottes Genosse: Eine Annäherung an Karl Barth* (Hamburg, Kreuz Verlag GmbH, 2018).

contested word; nevertheless, while nuanced by related terms like "comprehensive scheme," "ideology," and "cultural-linguistic system," religion will remain as a conventional term throughout this project. I will outline the history of the term below in order to explain its conventional use in a complicated history.

Having established the problem of negotiation of truth claims following the linguistic turn, we have explored the resources which linguistic philosophy contains for recovering meaning. Before proceeding to a bricolage for reading sacred texts together, one that allows for both particularity and the discovery of truth, we must establish three concepts that build on the insights of this new philosophical milieu and facilitate meaningful interreligious conversation: (1) the meaning of the word "religion," (2) Daniel Boyarin's concept of cultural dialectics, and (3) impediments to comparison.

First, the term "religion" needs clarification. As a convention it works well, but because white Protestant ideals have historically been close to the center of its semantic field, its meaning needs to be "nudged" by what Ryle would call an implication thread. Ronald Thiemann's notion of "comprehensive schemes," borrowed from John Rawls's political pragmatism, can serve as this thread.[156] For Thiemann in his 1996 *Religion in Public Life*, comprehensive schemes can be moral, philosophical, metaphysical, political, or traditionally "religious," so Marxism and Romanticism are candidates for public conversation alongside Zoroastrianism and Jainism.[157] This prevents religions from transcending political ideologies, but importantly it also prevents political ideologies (notably Rawls's liberalism) from transcending religions. Each comprehensive scheme, for Thiemann, constitutes its own cultural-linguistic system, and public

[156] For a postliberal concept of comprehensive interpretive schemes, cf. Springs, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 64ff.
[157] Ronald F. Thiemann, *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 81ff.

consensus depends on a conversation between a public's representative schemes. In other words, the major "religions" of the world are not the only candidates for contributions to societal culture, and the type of analysis that religious scholars perform may be performed on comprehensive schemes that are not classically "religious."

At first this would seem to challenge W.C. Smith's definition of religion as "poetry plus, not science minus" but Smith himself is prepared to describe the reading of poetry as another form of "poetry plus."[158] What makes religion "religion" applies to the non-"religious" forms of comprehensive schemes in Thiemann's typology—it is the encounter of people with an idea, a sort of fusion of horizons. "Religion" is better understood as a type of comprehensive scheme rather than as a subset of the larger category, since there can be significant bleeding between religion and the other types in any worldview, as with American civil religion.[159] Thiemann's "comprehensive scheme" is not meant to deny that "religion" is sacral (Durkheim), unique (Geertz), or inclusive of a remainder beyond empiricism (van Ball and van Beek). [160] Rather, it is meant to de-center "religion" and recognize its interrelatedness with other types of worldview, even if it remains a non-reduced category with descriptive force in a post-colonial world.[161]

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[158] W. Smith, *Scripture*, 278n.2.

[159] Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1974), 33.

[160] Though Geertz's definition has five parts, the last two relate to each other in such a way that all three definitions might be said to be quadripartite. For Durkheim, religion is (1) a unified system of (2) beliefs and practices involving (3) sacred – set apart – things creating (4) a unified moral community. Geertz defines it as (1) a system of symbols which (2) create motivations and (3) order existence, fostering (4) unique believability. Van Ball and van Beek define religion as (1) any idea (2) accepted as true and (3) relating to reality which is (4) empirically unverifiable. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 44; Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1973), 4; Jan van Baal and W.E.A. van Beek, *Symbols for Communication: An Introduction to the Anthropological Study of Religion* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1985), 3.

[161] Cf. Francisca Cho and Richard Squier, "'He Blinded Me with Science:' Science Chauvinism in the Study of Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* vol. 76 no. 2 (2008), 443; Derrida's distrust of the term "religion" was only in its reduced form: "*For me, there is no such thing as "religion"…Within what one calls religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or other religions—there are tensions, heterogeneity, disruptive volcanos,*

Thiemann's early notion of publicity (against Rawls's insistence that religion must be kept private) is meant also to nudge "religion" toward conversation; any religious tradition must be able to give a thick description of itself in order to establish its horizon of meaning.[162] As linguistic philosophers note, words—especially laden ones like "religion"—do not have fixed meanings.

"Linguistic philosophy" will serve as a term of convenience to describe a set of philosophical phenomena over the last century that has posited a fundamental relationship between language and the human experience. "Postmodernity" will refer to a series of responses to the empiricism and rationalism that fostered a sense of epistemological certainty and human progress in the wake of Enlightenment thinkers like Descartes, Locke, and Newton. Because "postmodernity" is a label for a movement that largely resists the constrictions of labels, it too will serve as a convention rather than as a description of a precise school of thought.

Now that I have clarified my use of the terms religion, linguistic philosophy, and postmodernity, I address my use of these five thinkers in my narrative argument for the comparative theologian as a fuser of horizons. A clear philosophical lineage connects Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Geertz. Recent scholarship has demonstrated considerable morphological similarity between Gadamer and Wittgenstein, though they approached language in very different ways. These writers remain important thinkers within a single discourse, and that allows me to draw on the set of five. I borrow from Derrida's use of Claude Levi-Strauss'

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sometimes texts, especially those of the prophets, which cannot be reduced to an institution, to a corpus, to a system…Then I would distinguish between religion and faith." Jacques Derrida *et. al*, "The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida," in Jacques Derrida and John D. Caputo. *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 21.

[162] Thiemann revised his position on publicity between his 1985 *Revelation and Theology* and his 1996 *Religion in Public Life*.

idea of *bricolage* to synthesize key insights of these authors to construct my own conception of a methodological approach to the texts at hand.[163]

Truth, Religion and Sacred Scriptures

I will describe religious traditions as "cultural dialects" rather than "cultural languages," in this subsection, I will provide an overview of three issues germane to my project: the nature of truth, the history of the term "religion," and the relationship between scripture and sacred text. The first part notes that postmodernity has increasingly challenged the notion of fixed objectivity and deals especially with competing truth claims. This discussion will be important for any dialogue involving strands within both Islam and Christianity—how are we to talk to each other if we do not agree on fundamental premises? Part of the answer to that question is that "religion" itself is a fluid concept with a complex history. Western Protestantism, which Western Protestant scholars of religion once considered normative, no longer is—Twelver Shīʿism is an equal interlocutor for Moltmannian Christianity. Finally, this dissertation relies on the involved source materials being considered useful for theological reflection. Drawing on the academic study of religion I show that these sources are indeed formative texts for their devotional communities even if they are not "scripture" *per se*.

Just as the insights of the linguistic turn lead to a more complex and historicized understanding of "scripture" and "religion," so it calls for a new understanding of "truth." Pilate's timeless question, "What is truth?" takes on new significance.[164] Following the linguistic

[163] For Derrida's use of the term *bricolage* for the selective use of other scholars' ideas in a one's own thought, cf. Derrida: "If one calls *bricolage* the necessity of borrowing one's concept from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is *bricoleur*." Jacques Derrida. *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass. (London: Routledge, 1978), 285

[164] John 18:38, NRSV.

turn, "one is unsure of how questions of truth can ever be asked."[165] Wittgenstein concedes that philosophy is an "object of comparison," and not "a preconceived idea to which reality must correspond;" this precludes philosophical "dogmatism" and claims to be able to uncover noumenal realities.[166] If two pre-modern cultural-linguistic systems make exclusive truth claims that modernity would consider incommensurate, how can a theory of pluralism hold them together? The relationship between "truth," "meaning," and "understanding" is crucial for answering this question.

The fuser of horizons plays a key role in excavating texts for meaning and truth claims. This is a useful concept given the challenges to meaning's discovery in the last century. Religious pluralism, an ever-increasing reality in a shrinking world, poses a number of challenges to the epistemological optimism which accompanied modernity.[167] Consider the law of noncontradiction, which states that something cannot both be and not be. For example, God cannot simultaneously be and not be incarnate. Theorists have at least five options for resolving the coincidence of multiple truth claims:[168] (1) All truth claims can be understood to approximate or participate in a single universal truth.[169] Truth is one but we glimpse it from different angles. This faces the above-mentioned problem of contradictory claims; it would seem that one must yield to the other.[170] (2) Because of this problem, one might instead say that ultimate truth is

[165] Stanley Hauerwas, "The Church as God's New Language," Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 157.

[166] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958 §131, 51.

[167] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984), 47.

[168] For a proximate explication of these options, cf. Springs, *Generous Orthodoxy*, 68ff. Importantly he highlights the "antihegemonic hegemony" of some pluralist approaches.

[169] Compare John Hick, "The Next Step beyond Dialogue in Knitter," in Paul F. Knitter, ed. *The Myth of Religious Superiority: A Multifaith Exploration*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 5.

[170] Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 46.

knowable, but that false sets of truth claims coexist with the correct set; only one worldview "has it right." The problem here is that with the erosion of modernist certainty, the objective "Archimedean" standing point that the Enlightenment claimed for itself has been exposed as either illusory or unattainable.[171] (3) One can posit the existence of truths that transcend human experience while conceding that these are unknowable. Since Kant's distinction between noumenon and phenomenon, this has been a popular option, but it is problematic within traditions that claim absolute or transcendent knowledge received through revelation, sacred text, supernatural experience, etc. (4) One can deny altogether that a universal truth exists, but such a categorical denial is itself a universal truth claim. (5) A further option exists, exemplified in the thoughts of Wittgenstein, Ryle, and Gadamer. Steering "a course between two 'heresies'—objectivism and relativism," these philosophers allow for the possibility of multiple, even fluid, truths by focusing on the linguistic epistemology of meaning and understanding.[172] Absolute truth can be, in this framework, paradoxically plural.[173]

For linguistic thinkers like Wittgenstein and Ryle, language can be adequate as a convention for day-to-day expression, but it is always imprecise and difficult to describe.[174] Ryle's idea of philosophy as "cartography" demonstrates the postmodern philosophical quandary.[175] It is easier but far less precise to know one's way through a village using the

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[171] For Archimedes' claim, "Give me a place to stand and with a lever I will move the whole world," cf. Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History of Diodorus Siculus, Fragments of Book XXVI*, trans. F. R. Walton, in *Loeb Classical Library* vol. XI (1957), 195.

[172] Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 109.

[173] For a useful typology of approaches to religious pluralism, see Perry Schmidt-Leukel, "The Tripolar Typology – Clarified and Reaffirmed," in Knitter, *Myth*, 13ff.

[174] Chantal Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein: The Post-Cartesian subject and the 'Death of Man'* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 21.

[175] Ryle, *Mind*, 207; for Wittgenstein's parallel concept see Barry Stroud, "Mind, Meaning, and Practice." In *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, edited by Hans Sluga and David G. Stern (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 317.

instinctual habits developed over a lifetime living there than it is to draw a bird's-eye map of the village. Wittgenstein himself reduced philosophy to logic (overthrowing such dimensions as metaphysics and ethics), then further reduced it to grammar and finally to merely descriptive "language-games."[176] In his posthumously-published *Philosophical Investigations*, he wrote, "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is."[177] Gadamer, too, decoupled linguistics from epistemological certainty; the Cartesian pairing of "truth" with philosophical "method" was for Gadamer a pretense to objectivity, when in fact meaning is more likely to be found in the concept of "tradition" that the Enlightenment eschewed.[178] In short, postmodernity, according to these scholars, has rendered philosophy impotent as an objective analytical science. Though his language is dated, Wittgenstein's indictment of philosophy's ambition is striking: "When we do philosophy we are like savages, primitive people, who hear the expressions of civilized men, put a false interpretation on them, and then draw the queerest conclusions from it."[179]

If truth and meaning are not to be found in empirical or rational philosophy, how are we to account for the functionality and complexity of language? Here Wittgenstein merges culture with grammar in his concept of language-games. Cultures and ideologies are grammatical systems, i.e., complex webs of interdependent rules which form internally-consistent "games." In

[176] Claude Imbert, "Pain: A Philosophical Borderland," in *Wittgenstein and the Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Jonathan Ellis and Daniel Guevara (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 262; I will describe Wittgenstein's use of this term shortly.

[177] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, I §124, p. 49.

[178] Chris Lawn and Niall Keane, *The Gadamer Dictionary* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 144f.; Chris Lawn, *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 34.

[179] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* I §194, p. 79; cf. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 200.

other words, the rules of grammar do not simply apply to "natural" languages like French and Japanese, but also to "cultural" languages like nationalism and Judaism. Cultural-linguistics does not help the problem of truth in a pluralistic milieu; quite the contrary, it asserts that meaning is difficult to translate across language games.[180] This would seem to put a conversational impasse between any two parties. I suggest that this obstacle can be reduced by thinking about cultural "dialects" rather than distinct languages.

The idea of cultural dialects is present in Boyarin's historical analysis of first century Judaism and Christianity. Boyarin notes that the difference between "dialects" is a better linguistic analogy for the relationship between these two traditions than the difference between "languages," and contends that the two drifted apart from each other the way that natural languages do.[181] I contend that Boyarin's paradigm of cultural dialects holds for Moltmannian Christianity and the Islam of the *maqtal* texts. While for Boyarin the connection between Judaism and Christianity is primarily historical while for the pair that I am studying it is primarily morphological—the concepts range from dissimilar to similar. Unlike Judaism and Christianity, which developed significantly in the same time and place, the *maqātil* come from historically distinct traditions.

Boyarin then challenges whether there is a clear distinction between "language" and "dialect:" "from a linguistic point of view, there is little or no difference between a standardized national language and a dialect in terms of their hierarchical ranking within the historical structure of a language."[182] As such, Boyarin's approach is a useful tool for softening Wittgensteinian cultural grammar. Because the linguistic drifting is gradual, it is impossible to

[180] Compare Lawn and Keane, *Dictionary*, 144 for a parallel in Gadamer's thought.
[181] Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 20.
[182] *Ibid.*, 20.

say where the firm borders between cultural-linguistic systems lie. Wittgenstein's talking lion may be able to communicate *something* to a person because both share the rudimentary experiences of being terrestrial, animal, mammalian, etc.[183] Boyarin's concept of "dialect" is a useful implication thread for softening the rigidity normally associated with cultural linguistics. This is by no means a challenge to Wittgenstein; he himself notes the fluidity of language-games: "There are *countless* kinds [of sentences]. New types of language, new language-games…come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten."[184] The idea of dialect leads to another important concept for religious comparison: what must two dialects have in common in order to put them in dialogue with each other? Are "cultural pidgins" possible? I contend, recalling Frei's Type IV theology, that communication becomes *more difficult* when genetic or morphological cultural expressions are farther apart, but that meaning-making is not *impossible*. It relies on the fuser of horizons to interrogate texts to find areas of categorical similarity and then put them into controlled dialogue with each other, and then to translate the results of this "scribal" effort into the fuser of horizons' idiom. One need not jettison Wittgenstein in order to discover constructive meaning emerging from two horizons of meaning, even if they are very different.

The Nature of Truth

J.Z. Smith also addresses the question of what one can and should compare. He notes four common modes of religious comparison: "the ethnographic, the encyclopedic, the

[183] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* II §xi, p. 223.
[184] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* I §23, p. 11.

morphological, and the evolutionary."[185] Adding a few contemporary modes to this list, he shows the vulnerabilities in each. From this list two modes seem to be useful for the development of a methodology for communication between religious traditions. Boyarin addresses the conditions of possibility for comparison. The morphological and the evolutionary both can indicate the degree to which two systems are related to each other. Boyarin wants to allow these two forms of heritability to determine the condition for the possibility of comparative religion across the language-games of cultural-dialects.[186] At the end of his analysis Smith is left with "the hoary question of diffusion versus parallel or independent invention," or, to put it another way, the question of whether genetic and morphological heritability can equally identify texts, ideologies, and comprehensive schemes eligible for conversation with each other.[187] Relatedness of either sort should qualify two traditions for such conversation, but the greater the degree of relatedness, the more fecund the conversation will be in producing meaning. We could understand something from Wittgenstein's lion, but it would not be much. If Wittgenstein had a chimpanzee it might be more; a goldfish and it might be less. Because relationship need not be simply genetic but potentially also morphological, one could imagine a situation in which an English-speaking lion who grew up under the same roof as I did might actually be more intelligible to me than a human raised with a completely different worldview, religion, and way of thinking.

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[185] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 22ff.

[186] Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 17f.

[187] J. Smith, *Imagining*, 26; Robin W. Lovin and Frank E. Reynolds, *Cosmogony and Ethical Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 11 propose a similar genetic-morphological typology: "For comparative ethics, then, one basic methodological choice was formulated before the turn of the nineteenth century in the controversy between Hume's empirical study of moral affections and Kant's formal explanation of valid moral reasoning. The students of particular cultures have…often been unwitting disciples of Hume…Many students of ethics have consciously chosen to follow Kant."

This questioning of discovering meaning is problematized further in Derrida's deconstruction. For Derrida, the ambiguity of linguistic expression leads to meaning being endlessly deferred: in order to understand a given word, one must understand every word in contrast to adjacent words (as well as every understanding of that word in the context of the author or text and the syntactical histories of both), then in turn understand every word in relation to *those* words, *ad infinitum*.[188] While one may hope for the "messiah" of understanding to come, such a promise is only ever realized in its not coming, its being forever over the horizon.[189]

Truth is elusive, and the Enlightenment optimism regarding objective epistemological progress is considerably dampened in the linguistic turn. For Gadamer, "meaning" is conflated with "significance," and the two emerge from "understanding" (which he famously defines as "the fusion of…horizons") to determine "truth."[190] Because this is always a subjective process, "the postmodernist proclaimers tell us [that] truth is always *truths*."[191] The multiplicity within "truth" allows postmodern philosophers to navigate between relativism (there is no stable truth) and absolutism (there is only one truth) though such navigation is not without its perils.[192] Importantly, understanding of truth is restricted to a dynamic encounter, so fixed meaning is either unknowable or nonexistent. Inheritors of the linguistic turn often dismiss the idea that an

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[188] Jacques Derrida, "Mémoires: For Paul de Man," in Eftichis Pirovolakis, *Reading Derrida and Ricœur: Improbable Encounters between Deconstruction and Hermeneutics* (Albany: NY: State University of New York Press, 2010), 135; Caputo, *Nutshell*, 173.

[189] Jacques Derrida, "For Justice to Come," in *The Derrida-Habermas Reader*, ed. Lasse Thomassen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 268.

[190] Lawn and Keane, *Dictionary*, 78; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 306; for a hermeneutical alternative consider E.D. Hirsch's critiques of Gadamer, Derrida, and others – Hirsch believes that meaning is located in the author's intent while significance is located in the reader's perception.

[191] Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 175, *emphasis added*.

[192] "Every 'universal' truth is universal only for its particular filter. That means that the particularity cancels out the universality." Ibid, 176.

author can communicate with a reader by means of an intermediate text, so the "truth" of a text is detached from the meaning which the author had in mind.[193]

The crumbling of Enlightenment certainty, the rise of pluralism, the exposure of colonialist hegemony, the legacy of terms like "religion" and "scripture," the vulnerability of "absolute truth," and the question of whether texts can read each other prior to a human reader interpreting them are all difficulties that postmodern thought has introduced to the field of comparative religion. We must acknowledge one further problem, perhaps the most difficult of all, before we propose a methodology for understanding the meaning in the intersection of worldviews: pure communication is nearly impossible.

A number of thinkers in the last century have illustrated this difficulty. Wittgenstein's provocative statement, "If a lion could speak, we could not understand him," shows the difficulty of communicating meaning across cultural-linguistic systems.[194] Gadamer focuses on the pre-judgments, or "prejudices," that are required for "*any* kind of discrimination," yet that prevent a reader from occupying the same hermeneutical space as the text she is reading.[195] Meaning is possible precisely *because* of pre-judgment, for it allows different horizons to fuse. Prejudice thereby obfuscates direct communication of meaning between text and reader—something new emerges when their horizons are fused. Derrida coins the term *différance* (an exact homophone of the existing word "différence," meaning both "difference" and "deference") to show how problematic spoken language is. A word is only ever contained in its opposite (difference) and understanding it requires an endless process of excavation (meaning is deferred). Furthermore,

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[193] Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 174; Warren Goldfarb, "Rule-Following Revisited" in Ellis and Guevara, *Philosophy of Mind,* 89.

[194] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* II §xi, p. 223.

[195] Lawn *Guide,* 1f.; Vanhoozer, *Meaning,* 106.

the ambiguity of sounds (one might imagine a parallel example from written language: the plurals for "axe" and "axis" are both written "axes" but are pronounced differently) makes the communication of meaning exceedingly difficult.[196] Ryle illustrates the difficulty of interpretation with the images of a boy rapidly closing then opening his eye (Is that a wink or an involuntary twitch?) and the expression of Rodin's *Le Penseur* (Is he preparing a toast, a speech, or a lecture?).[197] Geertz, methodologically indebted to Ryle's notion of "thick description," describes the perennial challenge of ethnography as one of "finding our feet."[198] He calls anthropological description "an unnerving business which never more than distantly succeeds," and says that the ethnographer is perpetually "trying to formulate the basis on which one imagines, always excessively, one has found" one's feet.[199]

The meaning of a text, whether fixed or not, can be located in many places. It can be in the mind of the author, in the text itself, in the reader and interpreter, or in the interaction between more than one of these. While the Enlightenment pursued objective truth through rational analysis and empirical study, postmodernity pursues truth in the interpretation of meaning. Ryle taught that language cannot be examined "in retirement, but doing [its] co-operative work."[200] In other words, language is better studied "in the field" than "in the lab." Gadamer located meaning in the engagement between a reader and a text, Wittgenstein in the complex and subtle communication within language-games, and Derrida in the still-to-come

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[196] Simon Glendinning, *Derrida: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66, Grenz, *Primer*, 143; cf. Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 150.

[197] Ryle, *Mind*, 206; "The Thinking of Thoughts: What is Le Penseur Doing?" (1968), in *Collected Papers, vol. 2* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 491; Geertz draws on Ryle's "wink" in Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culturem," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 1973), 6.

[198] Geertz, *Interpretation*, 7, 13.

[199] Ibid, 13.

[200] Gilbert Ryle, "Phenomenology versus 'The Concept of Mind'" (1962), in *Collected Papers, vol. 1* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 185.

"messiah" of understanding. For Ryle, words and phrases are ambiguous not only in the use of "puns" and exceptional cases, but in fact are so in "most of or all expressions."[201] Language works conventionally even if not precisely. Careful reading of a text is vital for this conventional understanding of it on its own terms.

Religion and Scripture

Two language conventions are important for our project. Increasingly difficult to stabilize in this new philosophical age are two terms that had been fixtures of modernist taxonomies: "religion" and "scripture." Historicizing and contextualizing them problematizes them—the development of the academic study of religion was far from "objective." Emerging in the late nineteenth century alongside other social sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and history, religious studies was colored from the beginning by its European / North American Christian (especially Protestant) biases.[202] Subsequent generations of scholars, with an increased historical consciousness, have acknowledged the imperialism, colonialism, and chauvinism that accompanied the field's early development. Recent scholars of religion have charted a more careful course in their approach to the world outside Protestantism and have acknowledged that Christian categories are neither normative nor the highest ideal.[203] Gadamer identified the "prejudices" with which scholars always approached texts and the realization of these prejudices has affected the academic study of religion.[204] Ideas that early scholars of the academic study of

[201] Ryle, *Mind*, 205.

[202] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 109, 126; Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 271ff.

[203] cf. Cho Squier, "Science," 421; Masuzawa, *Invention*, 23.

[204] Lawn, *Guide*, 1: "A prejudice is not a distorting form of thought that must be shaken off before we see the world aright. For Gadamer prejudices are present in all understanding."

religion took for granted have come under scrutiny. These include: (1) a taxonomic differentiation exists between *Volksgodsdiensten* ("natural religions") and *Wereldgodsdiensten* ("world religions"), (2) neutral religious comparison is facile, and (3) religion is a *sui generis* category and something more than the amalgam of underlying cultural expressions.[205] Even the category of "religion" itself is now negotiable. Does it exist? Can it be defined? Is it *sui generis*?[206] When culture is factored out, is there a religious remainder? Adopting a Swedish theological aphorism, Smith states, as was explored in the former discussion of religion, that, "Religion is poetry plus, not science minus."[207] The value of religion as "poetry plus" depends entirely on what the "plus" is. This plus, I argue, is the transcendent. Does it include ideologies like capitalism, socialism, and utilitarianism? Does it exclude categories like Confucianism (questionable transcendence), Buddhism (no creator deity), or Scientology (commercial and recent origins)? When pluralism and comparison are introduced, the questions multiply.[208] Contemporary pluralistic theorists often use concepts like a personal God, sacred text, and the ethical primacy of love to describe genuine religion, despite these being categories central to historical Christianity and other classical "world religions."[209] Any understanding of cross-cultural or trans-religious epistemology seems to risk confusing the subjectivity of the reader for

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[205] Cf. Masuzawa, *Invention*, 109, 183; J.Z. Smith, *Imagining*, 277. The Dutch scholar Cornelis Tiele used these terms that the German *Religionsgeschichteschule* appropriated as *Landesreligionen* and *Weltreligionen*.

[206] Russell McCutcheon contends that religion is reducible to the disciplines which analyze religious data – history, archaeology, cultural studies, etc. Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3ff. There is no remainder category called "religion." Elsewhere he asserts that, "unarticulated theories, vague definitions, and the presumption that our object of study is elusive and personal" has led to a "chaotic scholarly smorgasbord," an "utterly deregulated" field with "a complete absence of any explicit rationale." McCutcheon, *The Discipline of Religion: Structure, Meaning, Rhetoric* (London: Routledge, 2003), 88ff.

[207] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 66. Smith takes this adaptation from Krister Stendahl.

[208] Cf. Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 119ff.

[209] Cf. David Ray Griffin, ed., *Deep Religious Pluralism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 17; Knitter, *Earth*, 36; W. Smith, *Scripture*, 67.

the objectivity of truth. Given the postmodern deconstruction of objectivity, perhaps meaning and truth can be understood in other ways. In light of the linguistic turn, therefore, categories like "religion" and "scripture" are fluid. Because Western Protestantism is no longer religion *par excellence*, Moltmann's Lutheranism sits at a level dialogue table with the *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*.

Scholars of religion have shown the concept of scripture to be another unstable term. I contend that the texts in consideration, particularly the *maqātil*, should be considered "sacred," precisely because they are focal for the communities that read them theologically.[210] I take a broad approach to the concept of what "sacred text" can be, even its subcategory, "scripture." Derrida reminds us that all conversation is between "texts," even if nothing is written. There is something of the transcendent, of the scriptural, in everything in creation, including religious heroes.[211] When we read the stories of their lives we are transported beyond ourselves. Western religious studies started with a preference for a decidedly European-Christian conception of what constitutes genuine religion and legitimate scripture; recent generations have recognized this and begun to rethink these assumptions. This is important for reading *maqātil* as sacred texts and for the ability to compare religious literature across traditions. W.C. Smith defines "scripture" as something more than a text (or sacred object, observable ritual, historical event, etc.). Taking an approach similar to Gadamer's *Horizontverschmelzung* ("fusion of horizons"), Smith suggests that "scripture is a human activity," a "bilateral term [that] implies, in fact names, a relationship."[212] It is neither merely text nor art, but rather is "human involvement" in the

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[210] Consider here the tradition of *taʿziyeh* plays in Chapter IV. For the question of some sort of "sanctity" or "canonicity" of Moltmann's seminal work, I argue that it is too new, but its *subject material* has stood the test of ecclesiastical time. It qualifies, for the communities that it has inspired, as doctrinally authoritative even if the category of "holiness" is beyond the scope of this comparative work.

[211] For the concept of the created order being made of signs of God (*āyāt Allāh*) in Islam, cf. Chapter VI.

[212] W. Smith, *What is Scripture?*, 17f. For a concise explanation of Gadamer's concept, consider Malpas. "Hans-Georg Gadamer," *SEP*: "In phenomenology, the 'horizon' is, in general terms, that larger context of meaning in

religious object.[213] "Sacred text" is not a sequence of symbols written on a parchment any more than "scripture" is confined to the classic canons of "revealed" central texts (he cites the phenomenon of scripture in human interaction with the Anglican Book of Common Prayer and the Hindu *sruti/smrti* pair).[214] While sacred texts certainly have an evocative dimension, it is religious and therefore not an artistic artifact. The *maqātil*, while not "Scripture" in the traditional sense of that term, do fit Smith's sense of the term "sacred texts." They are a set of compilations whose narratives are a central source of introspection, belief, and experience for a particular community. They are "poetry plus"—narrative, literary texts that also communicate the transcendent. This matters because these texts share collective memory within their receptive communities and are useful for theological construction.

We have seen how the linguistic turn has drawn our attention to the ways in which terms on which we rely in theological discourse are unstable and complex. At the same time, by becoming attuned to these complexities we are in position to derive meaning in a more conscious and nuanced way. The following is an unpacking of the hermeneutical moves that the abovementioned scholars make in developing theories of meaning.

The "linguistic turn" is as much a problem as it is a solution. While Ryle believed that philosophical problems could be resolved through linguistic analysis, Derrida's further

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which any particular meaningful presentation is situated. Inasmuch as understanding is taken to involve a 'fusion of horizons', then so it always involves the formation of a new context of meaning that enables integration of what is otherwise unfamiliar, strange or anomalous. In this respect, all understanding involves a process of mediation and dialogue between what is familiar and what is alien in which neither remains unaffected. This process of horizonal engagement is an ongoing one that never achieves any final completion or complete elucidation—moreover, inasmuch as our own history and tradition is itself constitutive of our own hermeneutic situation as well as being itself constantly taken up in the process of understanding, so our historical and hermeneutic situation can never be made completely transparent to us."

[213] Ibid, 19, 278n.2.

[214] Ibid, 204f.

"graphematic turn" deconstructed the linguistic foundations for philosophical analysis.[215] Derrida exposed the postmodern epistemological condition: truth is nearly unknowable, meaning is nearly inaccessible, and communication is nearly impossible. The post-Kantian supposition that "words have stable, lexically determined meanings" could no longer be maintained.[216] For Wittgenstein and his followers language is complex, culturally embedded, and difficult to derive meaning from, yet it is the only access point to meaning and truth.[217]

If a reader is required for the emergence of meaning, then is it possible for two texts or ideas to have the potential to be put in conversation with each other through the interpretation of an interlocutor? Does this potential conversation depend on the fuser of horizons to name the terms and facilitate the conversation when she introduces the topic of conversation? Comparative religious ethicist Aaron Stalnaker offers a useful approach to this. In his *Overcoming Our Evil* he uses "bridge concepts" to compare the ethical perspectives of Xunzi and Augustine, two thinkers separated by time, geography, and tradition. [218] A bridge concept is an area of morphological similarity (such as divine passibility), a level table at which two authors or even texts can sit. It allows the reader to function as a fuser of horizons, someone who, having determined the topic of conversation, can observe the interaction between the two parties and interpret them to draw conclusions about their degree of compatibility and observe what new meaning is generated by the fusion of horizons. Does Xunzi have anything potentially to say to Augustine *before* Stalnaker puts them into controlled conversation with each other? If not, how can we know that

[215] Glendinning, *Derrida*, 51; Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman, *eds*, *Participatory Turn: Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 2f. Importantly, Derrida's graphematic turn, like Ryle's philosophy of mind, picked up on the insights of the later Wittgenstein.

[216] Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 109.

[217] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, I §18, p. 8; cf. Frei, *Theology and Narrative*, 109.

[218] Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil: Human Nature and Spiritual Exercises in Xunzi and Augustine* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006).

the conversation is not between *Stalnaker's* Xunzi and *Stalnaker's* Augustine? The care that Stalnaker puts into taking both thinkers on their own terms helps to minimize eisegesis, but the difficulty remains for any comparativist. I, as a fuser of horizons, intend to put into conversation and interpret Moltmann and the *maqtal* writers on the topic of theopassianism. The suffering of God is sufficiently germane to the theoretical dialogue between Moltmann and Twelverism. The traditions from which Moltmann and the *maqātil* come are not in the same cultural language, but there remains morphological similarity to put them into directed conversation. The chapters of this dissertation in which I describe the two cultural dialects (those of Moltmann and the *maqātil* writers) lay out these morphological similarities.[219]

Context-Dependent Communication

At this point, I turn to the questions of meaning's communication in the five linguistic scholars' work. This will allow me to develop the concept of the "fuser of horizons" who endeavors to discover meaning between texts. A language—either natural or cultural—is constituted by "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit."[220] Following Ferdinand de Saussure, postmodern scholars have noted that there is no fixed correlation between a signifier (such as a word) and that which it signifies: meaning is always context dependent.[221] Derrida's warning about the endless deferral of meaning is a powerful

[219] The morphological similarities between Jesus and Husayn were noticed by the *maqtal* writers, who explicitly drew parallels between the two, giving Muhammad's grandson ultimate priority.

[220] *Ibid.*, "Thick Description," 10; Geertz here is referring to the cultures which ethnographers study, though his description can be applied to the understandings of natural language in thinkers like Derrida and Gadamer. Wittgenstein shows that even the simplest linguistic system, the "complete primitive language," is a complex web (Wittgenstein, *Investigations* I §8, p. 5; cf. Stroud in Sluga and Stern, *Wittgenstein*, 304).

[221] Grenz, *Primer*, 143.

corrective to modernist insistence that texts have clear, fixed, and singular meanings.[222] At the same time, Derrida's detractors—John Searle, Noam Chomsky, E.D. Hirsch—point out that language is typically quite effective: "we can, at least in principle, say exactly what we mean."[223] Language works as a convention even if precise meaning is elusive. Wittgenstein, Gadamer, and Ryle all emphasize that language as *practice* is effective even if the *philosophy* of language is inefficient.[224] The communication of meaning, therefore, need not depend on a "pre-postmodern" philosophy of language: "The literary genre has its own resources with which to resist Derrida's attack on the idea of stable context."[225] Derrida himself is aware of this—only ironically and never deconstructively can he appear to signal language's death knell when he writes, "When a distinction cannot be rigorous or precise, it is not a distinction at all."[226] For him and for other inheritors of the linguistic turn, there are effective paradigms for the functional communication of meaning and therefore the discovery of intersubjective truths. The complex structures found in sustained and intentional use of language facilitate this communication.

Wittgenstein allows for intelligible communication of meaning between any two people who share a language-game.[227] Language is never private, for then it would cease to be language.[228] Rather, it is a complex series of "rules," much like the reading of an X-ray or the

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[222] Cf. Frei, *Eclipse*, 208f.; Glendinning, *Derrida*, 72.

[223] John R. Searle, "Literary Theory and Its Discontents." In *New Literary History* 25 (1994), 641; Noam Chomsky, *Chomsky on Democracy and Education*, ed. Carlos Peregrín (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003), 93; Lawn and Keane, *Dictionary*, 78.

[224] Goldfarb in Ellis and Guevara, *Philosophy of Mind*, 81; Lawn, *Guide*, 71;

[225] Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 339; contrast Searle, "Discontents," 639: "Derrida has a conception of 'concepts' according to which they have a crystalline purity that would exclude all marginal cases."

[226] Derrida, *Limited Inc* in Searle, "Literary Theory and its Discontents," 638.

[227] "Are we to say that *certainty* is merely a constructed point to which some things approximate more, some less closely? No. Doubt gradually loses its sense. The language-game just *is* like that" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, "On Certainty," in *The Collected Works of Ludwig Wittgenstein* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969] Accessed January 15, 2013).

[228] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* I §243, p. 88f.; Grenz, *Primer*, 114.

playing of a chess game.[229] Were someone to be shown a chess piece with the instructions "this is a king," she would not understand the piece's function if she did not know the rules of chess, but if she knew everything about chess except the shape of the king, she would instantly understand.[230] Scholars of language theory often rely on the example of chess because it is made up of constitutive rules—without the rules, there is no chess; without grammar there is no language. Wittgenstein's theological inheritors appropriate the concept of language-games to the category of religion: two adherents to a single religious tradition can communicate with each other about religious matters, but such communication across religious traditions is far more complex. A Christian and a Jew mean different things by "atonement;" a Muslim and a Hindu mean different things by "God." For these "postliberal" interpreters of Wittgenstein, meaning can be communicated best *within* a cultural-linguistic system.[231]

Gadamer allows truth to be discovered through his concept of "hermeneutical conversation."[232] Using Wittgensteinian language, Gadamer furthers the concept of language games in claiming that, "our conversation with a text is less an event in which we take the initiative than a game in which we participate."[233] There is always a back-and-forth between the two parties. The sum total of a reader's prejudices constitutes her "horizon" of understanding; the text similarly has a horizon. When the reader encounters the text, the two horizons fuse, leading to the discovery of meaning and newly forged truth.[234] Conversation, also called

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[229] I interpret Wittgenstein to be referring here to "constitutive rules," following John R. Searle, "Constitutive Rules" in *Argumentia* 4.1 (2018), 637-667..

[230] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* I §31, p. 15.

[231] Frei, *Eclipse*, 172; Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 49; cf. Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 308.

[232] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 349.

[233] Grenz, *Primer*, 112.

[234] Here Gadamer takes the possibility of meaning a step beyond Wittgenstein: "Wittgenstein sees only the consensual conventions of language and misses out the (historically) dynamic by which new meanings are forged. Crucial in Gadamer is the thought that there is always a surplus of meaning. New meanings, nuances, and

"dialogue," is the necessary precondition for understanding—as Wittgenstein dismisses "private" language, so Gadamer dismisses private meaning. Understanding is always "accommodation of the Other."[235]

Like Gadamer, Derrida is concerned with incorporating the voice of the "Wholly Other" (*le tout autre*).[236] Such incorporation is possible through his concept of "hospitality." For Derrida, "hospitality" is a word that is particularly bound up in its opposite: "For there to be hospitality, there must be a door. But if there is a door, there is no longer hospitality…As soon as there are a door and windows, it means that someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality."[237] Drawing on the fact that the French word for "host" is identical to the word for "guest" (*hôte*) and that the Latin root *hostis* provides French (and English) with the antithetical concepts "hospitality" and "hostility," Derrida notes that hospitality can be hospitality only when it is not hospitality, when its hospitality-ness is truly impossible.[238] One can encounter meaning, but can only do so out of the corner of one's eye. Paralleling Gadamer's skepticism of Enlightenment reliance on "method," Derrida claims that the "messiah" of meaning can only break in when it is least expected. The practice of language can uncover meanings that the analysis of it never can.[239]

Ryle notes that the practical use of language is effective precisely because it is imprecise. For him, this ambiguity is overcome through what he calls "implication threads" and

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interpretations are made possible by the tradition when tradition is understood as the (historical) movement of novelty and conventionality." Lawn, *Guide*, 84.

[235] Lawn and Keane, *Dictionary*, 31.

[236] Caputo, *Nutshell*, 124.

[237] Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality," in *Derrida-Habermas*, 225; cf. Glendinning, *Derrida*, 82.

[238] Derrida, "Hospitality," in *Derrida-Habermas*, 227; compare Hent de Vries, "Derrida and Ethics: Hospitable Thought," in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 176.

[239] Cf. Caputo, *Nutshell*, 111.

"paraphrase." All words and phrases have a plasticity of potential and so are meaningless in isolation. However, when one uses language, one does not simply blurt out ambiguous phonemes—one then clarifies them by restating them in other ways (paraphrasing) and using idioms and images (implication threads) to "push" the original phrase in different directions until it rests where the communicator wants it to be.[240] In this way, one might paint a "thick description" of the concept in one's mind in such a way that the recipient might understand one's point. This is never a perfect process, but it is sufficiently adequate to constitute effective communication. Appropriating Ryle's vision to the field of anthropological description, Clifford Geertz shows that such communication can allow for an understanding of the Other.

Geertz concedes that ethnographies "are themselves interpretations, and second and third order ones to boot."[241] They are therefore constructs, not simply reports of an objective cultural reality. He allows them to be called "fictions," but then clarifies this term: "fictions, in the sense that they are 'something made,' 'something fashioned'—the original meaning of *fictiō*—not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments."[242] Interpretive communication may be a fiction, but it is not false; indeed, it allows for a very real communication of meaning. Like the abovementioned linguistic philosophers, Geertz believes that through immersive, sustained, and self-reflective practice, a writer may come to understand the Other and then communicate a kind of intersubjective truth to her reader. Truth and meaning are accessible and can be communicated, but only carefully.

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[240] Ibid, 206; cf. Julia Tanney, "Gilbert Ryle," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab (2009), §3.

[241] Geertz, "Thick Description," 15; compare Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 1, 3.

[242] Geertz, "Thick Description," 15.

Ontology and Epistemology

The nature of this "truth" has become clear in the previous subsection—is not the same as the objective universals that the Enlightenment sought to uncover. It will be helpful at this point to consider such universals. "Ultimate Reality" is a difficult term for religious comparativists after the linguistic turn.[243] Ontological realities and epistemological certainties, if they exist, are obscured by the embeddedness of language and culture.[244] Any reading of a text, culture, or religious ideology is inextricably interwoven with the reader's prejudices. This means that all religious studies are in some sense comparative, even if the scholar attempts to be merely descriptive or analytical. Jonathan Z. Smith notes that while, "for the most part, the scholar has not set out to make comparisons," the scholar's horizon of understanding will tend to interact with the subject data: "often, at some point along the way, as if unbidden, a sort of déjà vu, the scholar remembers that he has seen 'it' or 'something like it' before."[245] While this inhibits the modernist projects of catalog, taxonomy, and description, it does not necessarily prevent the scholar from discovering communicable truths through data analysis. Wittgenstein notes that experience *is* hermeneutics, not a precondition for it: "we interpret it, and *see* it as we *interpret* it."[246] The meaning is the experience, or as Gadamer puts it, the truth is the understanding. This does not preclude a noumenal realm or even a vague noticing thereof, but it does suggest that such a realm must be as multifaceted as the horizons of experience that glimpse it. As Paul Knitter puts it, "if…Ultimate Reality or Truth includes differences and diversity, then we have to

[243] Cf. Knitter, "Pluralist Model," 37.

[244] Schmidt-Leukel, "Tripolar" in Knitter, *Myth*, 19.

[245] J. Smith, *Imagining*, 22.

[246] Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, II §xi, p. 193; cf. Reijo J. Työrinoja, "Private Language and Religious Experience," in *Philosophy of Religion: Proceedings of the 8th International Wittgenstein Symposium, Part 2*, ed. Elisabeth Leinfellner *et. al.* (Vienna, Austria: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1984), 167.

find ways of speaking about the 'manyness' contained in the Ultimate."[247] This statement is crucial, for it includes both human plurality ("differences and diversity") and a common humanity (Knitter's "we"). For Ryle, and especially Gadamer, the commonness of human cultural grammar (even given a cultural-linguistic framing) facilitates the discovery of truth.

The prejudice that Gadamer believes that all readers bring to their reading of texts (and all texts bring to their "reading" of readers) leads to hermeneutical plurality. Yet he "denies that [this] necessarily leads to relativism. Lying behind the Babel of competing interpretations is a shared reality—a world, a tradition, a language. Because of this common dimension, we can anticipate experiencing a 'fusion of horizons.'"[248] One fundamental assumption of modernity must be challenged for this new epistemology to stand on its own: the law of noncontradiction.

Contemporary religious scholars are faced with a plurality of truth claims. Is there a single sacred tongue? Has the divine taken human form? Is there life after death? The answer to each would seem to be either "yes" or "no," but not both. This presents a challenge to the ancient idea that contradictory notions cannot both be facts simultaneously. One solution is to exclude all religious systems which make exclusive truth claims, but this already imposes a kind of pluralist dogmatism on competing dogmatisms. If pluralism is to avoid colonizing religious cultural languages, it must challenge one of the West's oldest and most basic epistemological assertions.

Aristotle claimed that "the most certain of all beliefs is that opposite statements are not both true at the same time."[249] This "law of noncontradiction" became foundational in modern

[247] Knitter, "Pluralist Model," 37.

[248] Grenz, *Primer*, 110.

[249] Aristotle, *Metaphysics IV*. In *Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vols.17, 18*, trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, London, 1989), 1011b ¶3.

scientism, especially as expressed in the Pauli Exclusion Principle.[250] But postmodernity has begun to challenge the applicability of this principle to epistemology. Multiple, even mutually-contradictory truth claims can be said to be valid according to the principle of *Coincidentia oppositorum* noted by Nicholas of Cusa and revived in Kierkegaard's concept of "paradox" and Mircea Eliade's "mythical pattern."[251] Nicholas uses the "coincidence of opposites" to defend the logic of Christian Trinitarian theology: "join together antecedently, as I said, these things which seem to be opposites, and you will have not one thing and three things, or three things and one thing, but the Triune, or Unitrine. And this is Absolute Truth."[252] For Nicholas the coincidence of opposites facilitates faith in a Triune Godhead.

There is a difference between *positing* absolute truth and *knowing* it perfectly. Kant's agnosticism about the details of the noumenal realm did not prevent him from making universal claims about it. Some were necessary postulates (God exists, the soul is immortal), some were *a priori* categories (causality, possibility, and negation are known prior to experience), and some were ethical necessities (duty requires acting on universal maxims). Yet between Kant's turn to the subject and the early twentieth century linguistic turn, Kant's universals themselves became part of philosophical agnosticism. If we cannot get beyond grammar, then we can know nothing of the world beyond cultural linguistics. Language-games do function, but they do not participate in some larger "game of games" which transcends their particularity; there is no Platonic essence

[250] For a discussion of Pauli's claim that, "in an atom or molecule, no two electrons can have the same four electronic quantum numbers," cf. Sarah Faizi and Craig Fisher. "Pauli Exclusion Principle," in *Chemistry LibreTexts* (2020): https://chem.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Physical_and_Theoretical_Chemistry_Textbook_Maps/Supplemental_Modules_(Physical_and_Theoretical_Chemistry)/Electronic_Structure_of_Atoms_and_Molecules/Electronic_Configurations/Pauli_Exclusion_Principle.

[251] cf. Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia* (1490), trans. Paul Wilpert (Minneapolis, MN: Arthur J. Banning Press, 1981); Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 33; Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 419.

[252] Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia*, I,19 §58 p.32.

of which individual religions are mere manifestations.[253] This has deep implications for the study of religion: for linguistic philosophers John Hick's perennialist model of all religious traditions participating in a larger Ultimate realm must yield to an acknowledgement of particularity and plurality. One of Wittgenstein's contemporary interpreters, William Brenner, extrapolates a notion of religious transcendence from Wittgenstein's scattered theological aphorisms:

> "The use of the word 'God'?" Aren't the rules for its use modified as we move from one religion to another—from the Greek Olympian religion to Judaism, for example; or from fundamentalist to Anglican Christianity?" It seems clear that they are—sometimes radically. Wittgenstein would acknowledge that diversity and add some such disclaimer as: when I describe a religious language game, I am not trying to insinuate a theory about "the underlying essence of religion"; I am presenting my description as an object of comparison meant to throw light on differences as well as similarities in the use of "God" and related words.[254]

Wittgenstein himself inserts a curious parenthetical in his *Philosophical Investigations*. In the midst of a discussion about language-games, he writes, "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is. (Theology as grammar)."[255] In characteristic form he neither explains nor returns to his comment about theology, but his point stands. Theology is a language-game which is self-contained and which can rest on transcendent assumptions but cannot ground them. His agnosticism about the ultimate does not preclude its existence, but it does preclude our certainty about it: "In the decimal expansion of π either the group '7777' occurs, or it does not—there is no third possibility.' That is to say, 'God sees—but we don't know.'"[256] Epistemology after the linguistic turn can handle competing truth claims not only because it cannot know which one is correct, but because it cannot even know that they contradict. Postmodernity has tempered

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[253] Lawn, *Guide*, 68.

[254] William H. Brenner, *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 140.

[255] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* I §373, p. 116. For the boundaries of Wittgenstein's religiosity, see Earl Stanley B. Fronda, *Wittgenstein's (Misunderstood) Religious Thought* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010), 95.

[256] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* I §352, p. 112.

Enlightenment and modern optimism, but has sketched a linguistic space in which is open to new possibilities of meaning. Wittgenstein's early trust in logic has given way to his admission that we can never get beyond our linguistic embeddedness. Disparate worldviews therefore can be allowed to stand together on their own terms, and if Gadamer is correct, they can interact to disclose meaning and truth.

Methodology for Conversation

Conditions of Possibility for Inter-Traditional Conversation

In the above sections I established that meaning is difficult to pin down in light of the linguistic turn, then—through my own bricolage—found a way to account for the pluralism of truth. This allows me here to develop the concept of the fuser of horizons, someone who mediates conversations between texts. Exploring the thought of the five scholars associated above with the linguistic turn, I maintain that conversation across religious traditions, even in light of linguistic philosophical cautions, is possible. Communication breakdowns are possible at many levels—between author and reader, between text and reader, between speaker and hearer, even within a person's own mind—yet the same linguistic philosophers who problematize direct meaning also offer a more subtle way to find it. Exploring the thought of these five thinkers, I claim that conversation across religious traditions, even in light of linguistic philosophical cautions, is possible. Derrida's weak messianism—which he appropriates from Walter Benjamin and contrasts with teleological messianisms "which are a little too strong"—is a hope that meaning will emerge precisely when its emergence seems impossible.[257] Derrida holds out hope for meaning in language. Wittgenstein believes that hope itself is a function of language: "Can

[257] Caputo, *Nutshell*, 157ff.

only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language. That is to say, the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life."[258] Immersion in language is the ground of the human existence, and through language (natural and cultural) people can begin to understand one another. Truth can be glimpsed, so to speak, with a sideways glance. For Ryle and Gadamer immersion in a subject increases the chances of understanding it. Ryle's "thick description" requires a native familiarity with the grammar of a particular situation, and Geertz's application of the term suggests that outsiders can acquire this grammar to some extent. Gadamer's "prejudice" requires a recognition of one's own situated-ness and an immersion in the text's situation as well.[259]

Still, is there a limit beyond which such immersion is impossible? Can a reader's horizon be so different from a text's as to prevent their fusion? Above all, can language be universal in any significant way? Derrida warns that language is always imprecise. This warning is particularly appropriate for religious pluralists.[260] J.Z. Smith, quoting Hume, calls attention to the particularity of individual worldviews: "No two nations, and scarce any two [people], have ever agreed precisely in the same sentiments."[261] Knitter is wary of hastily dismissing religious particularity: "If pluralists can be commended for reminding all believers that no religion can have the final or full word, they perhaps need to be chided for not recognizing how different these words can be."[262] A degree of relatedness (genealogical or morphological) is a necessary

[258] Wittgenstein, *Investigations* II §i, p. 174.

[259] Jean Grondin, *The Philosophy of Gadamer*, trans. Kathryn Plant (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 94.

[260] The field of comparative religious ethics is more optimistic about suitable subjects for comparison. "However different our images of knowledge and conceptions of rationality, we share a huge fund of assumptions and beliefs with even the most bizarre culture we can succeed in interpreting at all" Lovin and Reynolds, *Cosmogony*, 29.

[261] J. Smith, "Religion," 273f.

[262] Knitter, *Myth*, 36; postliberals use this insight to challenge the possibility of interreligious communication: consider: "One can…no more be religious in general than one can speak language in general. Thus the focus is on

precondition for interreligious communication. How related two traditions need to be cannot be precisely calculated, however: the "cultural dialects" softening of Wittgenstein's borderlines prevents the delineation of a cutoff point.[263] The more related two horizons are, the more fruitful their Gadamerian fusion will be.[264] Comparative theologians must be more cautious about their constructive deductions if the two traditions they are studying are not closely related. A further question exists: does comparative theology necessarily take place in the reading of the theologian (fusing her horizon with those of two traditions and reporting her discoveries)? I contend that we can postulate the potential for a conversation between traditions based on their areas of common ground, or in the vocabulary developed in the previous section, their morphological or grammatical similarity. It is the content of the tradition that opens up the possibility for meaningful conversation, not the other way around. An interpreter can put two worldviews into conversation about any topic, but when the topic is particularly significant to each, the conversation is more likely to produce interesting results.

Gadamer's fusion of horizons always includes a text and a reader. This paradigm might be expanded in two crucial ways. First, the concept of "text" can be expanded beyond manuscripts. Derrida's notion of "specter," the sum total of meaning which inhabits a written document, is applicable to more than writing.[265] Theatrical performances, instantiations of

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particular religions rather than on religious universals and their combinations and permutations." Lindbeck, *The Church in a Postliberal Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 23.

[263] On the problem of which kind of heritability to prefer, consider: "we have yet to develop the responsible alternative [to continuing diffusion without systematic and theoretical depth or approaching history unsystematically]: the integration of a complex notion of pattern and system with an equally complex notion of history." J. Smith, *Imagining*, 29.

[264] Mary Ann Stenger believes that no phenomena that one observes are "totally alien," so any text is eligible for meaningful reading. Stenger, "Gadamer's Hermeneutics," in *Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays on Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Thomas Dean (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 152.

[265] Derrida, *Specters of Marx* in *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 141; cf. Jeff Collins and Bill Mayblin, *Introducing Derrida* (Duxford, UK: Icon Books Ltd., 2000), 167.

religious practices, songs, and conversations are all examples of "texts," broadly construed. A text therefore can be more than a document.

Second, we might say that horizons are fused anytime two specters encounter each other.[266] Truth, in its subjective form, is borne out of this encounter, and a scholar may discover this truth. Comparative theology can be organic because the underlying specters already have the potential to fuse horizons. Ashis Nandy, comparing Islam and Hinduism in Indian society, notes:

> When [one] faith provides…a counterpoint or balancing principle [for another], it no longer remains an alien faith or someone else's faith. You do not have to open an inter-faith or inter-cultural dialogue with such a faith, to conform to contemporary sensitivities. The dialogue already exists, waiting to be joined.[267]

If establishing this conversation is the first half of a methodology for discovering the meaning located between two texts, then facilitating Nandy's "joining" is the second. His noting of the immediacy and organic nature of dialogue allows us to suggest that faithful fusions of horizon occupy the empty space between potentiality and actuality of meaning-making. It is up to the fuser, then, to "listen to" the dialogue between texts that emerges through framing such dialogue along the lines of the shared bridge concept.

Conditions of Possibility for Recording Inter-Traditional Conversation

If Gadamer's paradigm can be applied to a conversation between two religious traditions, can that conversation be recorded? If so, the scholar would function as a "fuser of horizons," one who witnesses the conversation and records it. This requires two further acts of intelligible

[266] For Gadamer, the entire problem of Enlightenment objectivity is an imbalance in this equation – the neutral scholar listens to the text without telling it anything in return. Gadamer insists that, "we are irredeemably embedded in language and culture – and that the escape to unclouded certainty via rational method is a chimera." Lawn, *Guide*, 1f.

[267] Ashis Nandy, *Time Warps: Silent and Evasive Pasts in Indian Politics and Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 142.

communication. First, her understanding of this inter-traditional conversation must transcend the horizon of her own prejudice. Second, the horizon fusing scholar must record her understanding in such a way as to render it intelligible to her readers. Three conditions must be met for this threefold conversation (tradition-tradition, fused tradition-scholar, and scholar-readership) to be possible.

First, the fuser of horizons must sufficiently understand her own prejudices as to normalize for them—to the extent possible, she must "get out of the way" as a medium offering an etic description of her data to her readership.[268] Postmodernity has shown this to be difficult in practice and nigh impossible in theory: Cartesian "method" is an illusion. One who fuses horizons must be careful to become as proficient as possible in the various grammatical dialects of her subject material so as to minimize reading bias into the texts. At the same time, the fuser of horizons maintains control over the conversation, both facilitating and interpreting it.

Second, the modernist concept of "truth" as objective, knowable, empirical, and universal fact must be tempered by the cautions of linguistic philosophers. To this extent, the fuser of horizons' conclusions must be understood as incomplete. Hans Frei suggests this: "A good interpretation of a text is one that has 'breathing space,' that is to say, one in which no

[268] While I suggest that the comparative scholar is a fuser of horizons, I suggest that another image can be that of a scribe. I have chosen the term "scribe" intentionally because historical criticism has shown that ancient scribes were fallible. The reader is inevitably part of the conversation, but the fuser of horizons primary purpose is to moderate a controlled engagement between the two objects of comparison. I do not intend the term to recall Derrida's "scribe" Thoth, the Egyptian god who functions as "scribe and bookkeeper of Osiris" who was "master of divine words" but rather the classical scribe who had the momentous task of recording speech and transcribing manuscripts in order to propagate knowledge. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 91. Scribal errors, interpolations, sloppy handwriting, and redactions (whether well-intentioned or nefarious) are not normative but they are possible, so the transmission of a text will reflect something of the scribe's prejudice. The antidote to scribal error is immersion in the worlds of both the data and the readership. Geertz requires ethnographers to pay careful attention to the world of their data: "Culture is most effectively treated [purely] 'in its own terms'…by isolating its elements, specifying the internal relationships among those elements, and then characterizing the whole system in some general way." Geertz, "Thick Description," 17.

hermeneutic finally allows you to resolve the text."[269] Gadamer's interrelated notions of truth and meaning leave this "breathing space:" "for Gadamer, truth is not method but simply what happens in dialogue. Acts of interpretation are dialogical, a ceaseless conversation that is, within tradition."[270]

Third, the fuser of horizons must seek thick description both in the witnessing and the interpretation of the conversation between texts. This is the twofold task (witnessing and interpreting) of translation. Geertz's ethnographer "must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" the culture she is observing.[271] This holds true for the fuser of horizons recording the conversation between texts—she must allow the texts themselves to describe their horizons thickly, then she must thickly describe her findings to her readers.

If these conditions are met, which I contend they can be, then two texts may be put into a mediated reading of each other and the fuser of horizons may report the meaning that emerges from this merger to her readership. Still, the confidence which fueled the taxonomic process of modernist comparative religion will be absent, and truth will remain subjectively within the bounds of cultural dialects.

Proceeding with Caution

I have offered a methodology for initiating a conversation between traditions. This methodology allows the comparativist to take seriously the limits that linguistic philosophy has placed on epistemological certainty, yet without denying the possibility that meaning, truth, and religion exist beyond cultural relativism. We need to be careful in light of two questions. First, to

[269] Frei, *Theology and Narrative*, 162.
[270] Lawn, *Guide*, 2f.
[271] Geertz, "Thick Description," 10.

what end is the "reading together" being attempted? J.Z. Smith asks this question of the larger field of comparative religion: "We know better how to evaluate comparisons, but we have gained little over our predecessors in…the reasons for its practice…The 'how' and the 'why' and, above all, the 'so what' remain most refractory."[272] Second, even if the "so what" is answered (it is beyond the purview of this chapter to address this question, but it cannot be skirted prior to comparison), the trustworthiness of conclusions is still uncertain. The methodology asserts effective conversation at three levels: the traditions will meaningfully communicate with each other; the meaning in this communication will be intelligible to the fuser of horizons, and the fuser of horizons will accurately describe this meaning in her scholarship. Four horizons of meaning are involved—those of each text, those of the fuser of horizons, and and those of the reader. With Wittgenstein's and Derrida's cautions reminding the scholar that misunderstanding is a pervasive limitation of language, the fuser of horizons must be careful not to claim that her analysis is *the final* word on the subject.[273] Modernist "claims of epistemological monopoly" lead to hegemony and chauvinism, and ultimately stifle the voice which the entire discipline is most eagerly seeking—that of the texts.[274]

I assert that the theologies undergirding Moltmann and the *maqātil* are sufficiently morphologically similar to be put into conversation. Although they employ different cultural dialects, there is enough conceptual similarity to allow for a meaningful conversation. I strive to be careful and cautious in relating the texts to each other, while recognizing the difficulty of reaching that goal. With all of these considerations I will approach the *maqātil* as an interpreter, maintaining that although I am formatively closer to Moltmann, I can still attempt to read the

[272] J. Smith, *Imagining*, 35.
[273] Cf. Knitter, *Theologies*, 176; Frei, *Types*, 85.
[274] Cho and Squier, "Science," 433.

maqātil on their own terms. I understand that they inhabit different cultural grammars, but recalling Daniel Boyarin I will deploy the concept of cultural dialects in my concluding chapter to assess their degree of similarity.

Following Geertz—who claims that every ethnography is an interpretation—I am striving to be careful and cautious in relating the texts to each other. They are different genres but the thick descriptions they provide allow a reader to understand from them the cultural grammars of the cultures from which they emerged.

The texts are written in language, which Wittgenstein argues is never private. The communication of meaning is philosophically problematic but conventionally possible. the above discussion of language threads as terms whose meaning tugs the reader in one direction or another, is useful here. Though it comes from a different cultural grammar than my own, I can read and understand a *maqtal* text. The understanding might not be complete, but it is significant.

It is to these texts that I, acting as a fuser of horizons, now turn. I will present each interlocutor, reading it with attention to theopassianism. In the coming chapter, I will undertake a historically contextualized discussion of Moltmann's contributions to thought on divine passibility, which he developed principally in his landmark treatise *The Crucified God*. The following chapters will be devoted to reading closely late Abbasid *maqātil* which also, I will argue, portray God as passible. Looking closely at Moltmann's and the *maqātil*'s treatment of this topic will shed light on areas of interesting morphological similarity for the two—which in turn allows for a fusing of horizons and realizing the possibility of dialogue between the two traditions these texts represent.

Chapter III: *Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?*: Jürgen Moltmann and Divine Passibility

The belief that God is a suffering God has become compelling for recent theology. Centuries of traditional belief about the impassability and the immutability of God have been overturned in this age.
– Paul Fiddes[275]

Jürgen Moltmann (b. 1926) is a prolific theologian who, especially in his early work, treated the *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross) in a radically profound way. His insight that the Father suffers in the crucifixion of Jesus calls into question the ancient doctrine of divine impassibility, that is, the idea that God cannot suffer change. This idea is one, I will later argue, that can be brought to bear on *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*, resulting in a productive and theologically significant reading of these texts. This chapter will first provide a brief overview of the stakes of the debate about divine change, highlighting important historical developments that will provide context for subsequently understanding Moltmann's contribution in light of earlier Christian history. It will look at the Council of Chalcedon (451) and the codification of Christian orthodoxy, as well as give attention to Patristics such as Origen of Alexandria (d. 254), Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373), Pope Leo I (d. 461), and especially Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444).[276] Next it will look at developments of cross theology, beginning with Martin Luther (d.

[275] Paul Fiddes. *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992), 16.

[276] It is beyond the purview of this dissertation to discuss in any depth the positions of Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), though both affirmed divine impassibility. For the example of Anselm, consider George Hausinger's reading in his *Reading Barth with Charity: A Hermeneutical Proposal* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015). Anselm's doctrine of God included the elements of aseity (God is self-sufficient), simplicity (God is indivisible), immutability (God is outside of the change and flux of the temporal realm), timelessness (God is eternal), and impassibility (God is invulnerable to suffering). For the case of Aquinas, see Thomas Weinandy's *Does God Suffer?* (see below) and his 2002 article of the same name, p. 9: "Aquinas brought new depth to this patristic understanding of God and to why he is immutable and impassible. Creatures exist and so are in act, yet they constantly change because they continually actualize their potential either for good and so become more perfect or for evil and so become less perfect. God is not in this act/potency scheme of self-actualization. God, Aquinas argued, is 'being itself' (ipsum esse) or 'pure act' (actus purus) and so cannot undergo self-constituting change by which he would become more perfect." See also Leftow, Brian. "God's Impassibility,

1546) and Thomas J.J. Altizer (d. 2018) before turning to Moltmann. At this point the chapter will provide a brief summary of Moltmann's major works and then outline contemporary scholarship on them, with attention to both his critics and his defenders. From there, it offers a close reading of the book that serves as the motivating prompt for this dissertation, Moltmann's 1972 book, *The Crucified God*. This will lay out Moltmann's argument for "patricompassianism," the belief that God the Father suffers alongside the Son. Having established the history and stakes of divine passibility in Christian thought, the dissertation will continue with three chapters that look for the possibility of such passibility in a reading of martyrologies of the third Shīʿite Imam, Ḥusayn bin ʿAlī (d. 680). Moltmann's conclusions, combined with the methodology described in Chapter II, will inform the reading of the *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* in Chapters IV-VI.

The Debate over Divine Passibility

The question of divine passibility has been a contentious issue in Christian thought since the days of early church theologians. An important early commentator on divine passibility was Origen of Alexandria. In order to reconcile biblical and philosophical conceptions of divine *passio*, Origen chooses to interpret the scriptures spiritually and metaphorically rather than literally.[277] Some parts of scripture seem to describe God anthropomorphically (and anthropopathically) and as being infused with passion; Origen interprets such passages as being metaphorical/figural in order to avoid ascribing *passio* to God.[278] Nevertheless, he famously

Immutability, and Eternality" in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[277] Samuel Fernandez Eyzaguirre, "'Passio Caritatis' According to Origen 'In Ezechielem Homiliae' VI in the Light of 'DT' 1, 31," in *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 60, no. 2 (2006), 138.

[278] Eyzaguirre, "Passio Caritatis," 146.

declares: "*Ipse Pater non est impasibilis*" (the Father himself is not impassible).[279] For him *caritatis passio* resolves this tension—God's passibility is found in God's charity. Origin rejects the idea that God has negative emotions like rage, but he also rejects the idea that God is impassible to mercy. In this way, God is neither passible nor impassible; the Bible ascribes words of passion and feeling to God because it is only in these familiar human terms (which Origin ultimately considers metaphorical) that people can understand God.[280] Philanthropy and mercy belong to the "pre-existent Logos."[281] Origen carefully gives room for passibility as implied in the biblical witness; this nuance would recede in later centuries.

Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth century was among the most important challengers of divine passibility. Cyril states, "[Jesus] suffered impassibly, because he did not humble himself in such a way as to be merely like us."[282] Cyril, a major figure in the forging of orthodox Christology, made this point forcefully two decades earlier than Chalcedon (451) in his refutation of Nestorianism, a doctrine that opposes the hypostatic union. For him, the human Jesus suffered on the Cross, but the Second Person of the Trinity paradoxically did not. The second of Cyril's twelve anathemas states, "If anyone shall not confess that the Word of God the Father is united hypostatically to flesh, and that with that flesh of his own, he is one only Christ both God and man at the same time: let him be anathema."[283] In other words, the hypostatic union is fundamental to his understanding of orthodoxy.

To quote Cyril directly:

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[279] Cyril in Ibid. 140.

[280] Ibid.: "[This statement seems] to contradict other origenian texts which proclaim, along with Greek philosophical and patristic traditions, the absolute apatheia of both God the Father and the divine nature of the Logos."

[281] Ibid, 135; cf. 146.

[282] Cyril in John Anthony McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010), 35.

[283] Cyril of Alexandria, "Twelve Anathemas," in *Early Church Texts.* https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/cyrilofalex_twelve_anathemas.htm.

> "We say that he 'suffered and rose again.' We do not mean that God the Word suffered in his Deity...for the Deity is impassible because it is incorporeal. But the body which had become his own body suffered these things, and therefore he himself is said to have suffered them for us. The impassible [God] was in the body which suffered."[284]

For Cyril and his Chalcedonian inheritors, divine suffering (though not divine love) is out of the question; rejecting the idea that God suffers allows for God's omnipotence to be maintained, therefore preserving God's ability to save.[285] However, it is difficult to reconcile the hypostatic union with a doctrine that distinguishes between the two natures regarding suffering. If Jesus Christ is God-made-flesh, it would seem to follow that God suffers on the cross.[286] A plain reading of the Chalcedonian creed does not clarify this—it does not immediately resolve this paradox.

At the Council of Chalcedon what we now think of as classical Christology was codified. The Chalcedonian Creed (also known as the Definition of Chalcedon) declares,

> Following, then, the holy Fathers, we all unanimously teach that our Lord Jesus Christ is to us One and the same Son, the Self-same Perfect in Godhead, the Self-same Perfect in Manhood; truly God and truly Man; the Self-same of a rational soul and body; co-essential with the Father according to the Godhead, the Self-same co-essential with us according to the Manhood; like us in all things, sin apart; before the ages begotten of the Father as to the Godhead, but in the last days, the Self-same, for us and for our salvation (born) of Mary the Virgin *Theotokos* as to the Manhood; One and the Same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten; acknowledged in *Two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the Natures being in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the properties of each Nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and One Hypostasis*; not as though He was parted or divided into Two Persons, but One and the Self-same Son and *Only-begotten God*, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ; even as from the beginning the prophets have

[284] Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1963), 67.

[285] Cf. Joseph M. Hallman, "The Seed of Fire: Divine Suffering in the Christology of Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorious of Constantinople," in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, vol. 5 no. 3 (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Univerity Press, 1997), 373f.

[286] Cf. Anthony Giambrone, "Neo-Arians, Richard Bauckham, and the Revenge of Alexandrian Christology," in *Angelicum*, vol. 94, no. 2 (2017), 375.

> taught concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath taught us, and as the Symbol of the Fathers hath handed down to us.[287]

Because the Two Natures of Jesus Christ are indivisible in the "Only begotten God," it follows that what can be ascribed to the Father in terms of subjectivity to change holds true for the Son. The architects of Chalcedon were unwilling to concede patripassianism; the Triune Godhead must be impassible.

For Athanatius, whose Triniarian and anti-Arian view was cemented into the creed at Chalcedon, "the divine nature in Jesus was identical to that of the Father and that Father and Son have the same substance. He insisted on the need for the Nicene homoousios to express the Son's unity with the Father."[288] This concept bleeds over to the issue of divine passibility. Still, the Hellenistic language of the Chalcedonian Creed requires divine impassibility (Christ suffers), for God would cease to be "perfect" if one permitted suffering and change.

In his *Tome,* Leo argues against Eutyches, a staunch anti-Nestorian whose monophysite position held that Christ was simply divine. Giles Emery points to the implications that Leo's position and that of Chalcedon have for divine passibility:

> Deepening the expression of the doctrine of the two natures in the one person of Christ, Chalcedon wards off the danger of a division of the two natures (Nestorianism), but rejects also the monophysite confusion of those who "fantastically suppose that in the confusion the divine nature of the Only-begotten is passible (*pathetes*)." Following St. Leo, the dogmatic definition affirms that "the property of both natures is preserved," in such a manner that the divine nature and the human nature are united "with no change" (*atreptos*) in the person of the incarnate Son. One should not be astonished, then, that Chalcedon expressly "expels from the assembly of the priests those who dare to say that the divinity of the Only-begotten is passible (*pathetes*)."[289]

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[287] T. Herbert Bindley, ed. *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith* (London: Methuen, 1899), 297, *emphasis added*.

[288] Hans J. Hillerbrand and Matt Stefon, "The Arian Controversy," in Kara Rogers, ed., *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2007), https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christology/The-Arian-controversy.

[289] Emery in Keating and White, 30f.

Leo objects strongly to the idea that God the Son is vulnerable to suffering. Chalcedon and Leo, therefore, mark moments in which impassibility was etched into Christian orthodoxy. Much earlier Origen had written that, "God must be believed to be entirely without passion and destitute of all these emotions."[290] Athanasius held a modified version of this view.[291] But then what is one to make of the narrative of Christ's suffering and Godforsakenness at Golgotha?[292] Can one say, in a sense, that the Second Person of the Trinity suffers in the death of Jesus of Nazareth? Luther wrestled with the implications of an atonement theory that rests securely on the shoulders of Jesus' humanity: "if it cannot be said that God died for us, but only a man, we are lost; but if God's death and a dead God lie in the balance, his side goes down and ours goes up like a light and empty scale. Yet he can also readily go up again, or leap out of the scale!"[293] For Luther God can endure suffering yet come out unscathed. This historical overview of major responses to the debate over divine passibility shows the range of views that have been posited on this topic. As we have seen, understanding God as largely impassible has been characteristic of classical Christian thought, though there have been a variety of efforts to reconcile this impassibility with the suffering of Jesus on the cross. Impassibility would be the dominant Christian theological perspective from the third through the eighteenth centuries.[294] When in the

[290] Origen, *De Prin.* 2.4.4, cited in Thomas G. Weinandy, "Impassibility of God," in *Encyclopedia.com* (2020), https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/impassibility-god.

[291] Cf. Athanasius: "One cannot say that [pain, agitation and distress in soul] are natural to Godhead, but they came to belong to God by nature, when it pleased the Word to undergo human birth and to reconstitute in himself, as in a new image, that what he himself had made but which had been disorganised by sin, corruption and death." Athanasius, *Contra Apollinarem*, in Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being in Three Persons* (London: T&T Clark, 2001), 248.

[292] Fiddes notes a hesitation in the early Fathers to affirm divine compassion because of its theosophical implications: "…to be *affected* by others is to be *changed* by others; this is why [classical theologians] were so anxious to deny compassion in God, and if we are going to affirm it we must be prepared to accept the consequence from which they shrank." Fiddes, *Creative Suffering*, 18.

[293] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, vol. 41*, ed. Gritsch, Eric W. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1968), 103f.

[294] Anthony N. S. Lane, "Review of Does God Suffer? by Thomas G. Weinandy," in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2004), 422.

modern era theologians turned toward reconceiving of divine passibility, they responded in part by challenging these classically held positions. Next, I turn to introducing this modern turn with a focus on Jürgen Moltmann and the development of his theological thought.

Situating Moltmann's Work in Connection with Modern History

Understanding Moltmann's historical context is important for understanding his theology. Important for both is the concept of the "death of God." Drawing on the language of G.W.F. Hegel (d. 1831) and Friedrich Nietzsche (d. 1900), Thomas J.J. Altizer published an article in a 1966 edition of *Time* with the cover boldly asking, "Is God Dead?" In it, he argued that a disenchanted, secularized world no longer has use for the God of classical theism, and that there needs to be a way to account for the Christian narrative in light of this loss. Around the same time, a young Moltmann was beginning to reformulate the teachings of Karl Barth (d. 1968) to come up with another solution to the problem of God in a post-Christian world that was itself trying to come to terms with the existential trials of the twentieth century:

> The problem of modern man is no longer so much how he can live with gods and demons, but how he can survive with the bomb, revolution and the destruction of the balance of nature. He usurps more and more of nature and takes it under his control. The vital question for him, therefore, is how this world which he has usurped can be humanized.[295]

The solution to this "problem of modern man," for Moltmann, is to jettison impassibility from discourse surrounding the doctrine of God. At this point it is prudent to outline briefly some

[295] Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 92. For Barth's own position on passibility, consider the Barthian scholar Hausinger's *Charity*. Drawing on Barth's *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, Hausinger writes, "In surrendering himself to suffering and death for the sake of the world, the Son of God does not change (*verändert sich nicht*). He does not cease to be God. Nor does he constitute himself as God. He simply 'activates and reveals himself' for who he is in a new and temporal form (*betätigt und offenbart sich*)."

of his major contributions to theological discourse and some of the more relevant responses to them vis-à-vis the project of this dissertation.

Throughout his career, Moltmann published several major theological texts that discuss what is, in his view, a conception of God appropriate to the contemporary world. His first book, 1964's *Theology of Hope*, focuses on Christ's resurrection and the promise that it brings to humanity, while his second book, *The Crucified God*, focuses on the cross and its implications for Trinitarian theology and for human salvation. We will turn to this latter work in depth shortly. In 1975 he published *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, which follows up on the liberationist themes with which *The Crucified God* concludes.[296] It is his most notable work on ecclesiology, distinguishing between the several roles that the contemporary Church plays eschatologically, spiritually, and politically, always with a focus on the Trinitarian economy of deliverance. He went on to write a manuscript on the doctrine of the Triune Godhead (1980), and then to publish his 1984-85 esteemed Gifford Lectures in which he addresses issues of creation ranging from ecology to evolution to the *imago Dei* (image of God in humanity). Among his more recent books is 2010's *Ethics of Hope* and 2014's *The Living God and the Fullness of Life*.

Jürgen Moltmann's theological journey began in the Allied camps where he was a German prisoner during World War II.[297] There, three experiences converted him from the secularism of his family of origin. First, he was shown raw images of Nazi atrocities in the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Auschwitz; this experience filled him with guilt. Second, an American chaplain gave him a copy of the New Testament and Psalms which he first

[296] Richard Bauckham notes that Moltmann inadvertently wrote a "trilogy" in these first three books; they "can be read as complementary perspectives in a single theological vision." Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 3.

[297] Biographical details in this paragraph are taken from Hyung-Kon Kim's contribution to the *Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia of Western Theology*, ed. Derek Michaud, Wesley Wildman.

read out of boredom but subsequently came to find convincing. Third, he encountered great hospitality among the Scottish Christians who he met while a prisoner. After his release, he returned to Germany, where he studied the theology of Karl Barth. Initially hopeful that the momentum of the Confessing Church would continue in postwar Europe, he eventually became disillusioned at the retreat of the institutional church into the twin corners of apathy and ambiguity. The development of Moltmann's frustration led him gradually to turn from the Barthianism of his training and to emphasize the publicly liberating role of Christian theology.

This shift can explain the differences between Moltmann's first major work, *Theology of Hope* (1964) and his second, *The Crucified God* (1972). The two books are dialectically linked but differentiated by perspective. He notes in the latter that "*Theology of Hope* began with the *resurrection* of the crucified Christ, and I am now turning to look at the *cross* of the risen Christ."[298] By the 1970s, Moltmann had come to realize that "unless it apprehends the pain of the negative, Christian hope cannot be realistic and liberating," so in *The Crucified God* he transitioned from a Calvinist eschatological framework to a Lutheran theology of the cross.[299] A number of formative sources combine with Luther's *theologia crucis* and Moltmann's own experience of a thoroughly broken world to provide the background for *The Crucified God*.

Moltmann relies on the biblical exegesis of thinkers ranging from the early Church to contemporaneous historical critics (specifically Erik Peterson). He draws on the Johannine and Marcan accounts of divine passion but focuses primarily on Paul as interpreted by Luther. Methodologically he is indebted to the critical neo-Hegelian dialectics of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the political theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the socialist philosophy of

[298] Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 5.
[299] Ibid, 5.

Ernst Bloch.[300] Twentieth century Lutheran theologians like Martin Kähler, Paul Althaus, Ernst Käsemann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg are strong influences whom Moltmann cites frequently. The "New Left" activist movements of the 1960s, the emerging "death of God" theology of Thomas J.J. Altizer and Paul Tillich, and Karl Rahner's focus on the Trinity also seem to stand behind *The Crucified God*. Finally, Moltmann greatly admires the "*pathetic* theology" of Abraham Heschel and the "theology of God's humiliation of himself" of Elie Wiesel.[301]

The Crucified God: Major Points

"The theology of the cross must be the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Trinity must be the theology of the cross."[302] With this statement Moltmann sums up his doctrine of God—all Christian theology must be articulated in light of the suffering of the crucified Christ. Because the one who suffered was both "Jesus" (historical and human) and "the Christ" (eschatological and divine), any Christian doctrine that does not resolve the dialectic inherent in the hypostatic union is insufficiently grounded.[303] Politically detached dogmatism and theologically apathetic activism represent the dominant expressions of contemporary Protestantism, but a dialectical reading of Martin Luther's theology of the cross can provide a third way which is more faithful to Paul's articulation and early Christian expression. Relying primarily on Luther's exegesis and Hegel's method, Moltmann makes recourse to what he considers to be helpful strains in the early church and contemporary Roman Catholic (especially

[300] For Moltmann's indebtedness to Bloch's Marxism, cf. Bauckham, *Theology*, 2.

[301] Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 270; 273.

[302] Ibid, 241.

[303] This dialectic is very important, that Jesus Christ can simultaneously be fully human and fully divine. As we have seen above, Chalcedon's attempt at resolving the seeming disconnect between the hypostatic union and the crucifixion is ultimately unsatisfactory for Moltmann. If Jesus suffers, then for Moltmann God suffers.

that of Johann Baptist Metz and Karl Rahner) and Lutheran thought. His primary move is to show that the "crucified Jesus" is fully identified with the "suffering God" and that this identity has dogmatic and practical implications for contemporary Christian life and faith.

Several themes, often subtle or implicit, undergird the various movements of *The Crucified God*. First, Moltmann seems to be responding primarily to the existentialism represented by Rudolf Bultmann, which the former believes has encountered a crisis of identity in a world struggling to come to terms with the suffering and injustice of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and the Vietnam War. Second, a dialectical (instead of analogical or systematic) reading of the hypostatic union must be taken to its logical conclusion—divinity fully unified with humanity in the person of Jesus implies that the suffering of Christ must be suffering in both natures. Third, the event of the cross (which dialectically paired with the resurrection is the primary point of entry for Christian theology) collapses humanity (suffering, history) and divinity (glory, eschatology) into one another. In other words, the hypostatic union is realized in the crucifixion. Fourth, Martin Luther's articulation of the *communicatio idiomatum* and the "death of God" make him an ideal starting point for articulating a dialectical theology of the cross.[304] It is to a close reading of Moltmann's manuscript that we now turn.

The first portion of *The Crucified God* (chapters 1-3) lays out the problem with which Moltmann will grapple and the theological methodology that he will use. He begins by challenging the dominant ways in which Christians have understood, venerated, and appropriated

[304] Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 3; 65; 234. The *communicatio idiomatum* suggests, "that the properties of the Divine Word can be ascribed to the man Christ, and that the properties of the man Christ can be predicated of the Word." "Communicatio Idiomatum" in the Catholic Encyclopedia. https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04169a.htm. For Luther, and against the Reformed tradition, Christ's physical body shares in the omnipresence of the Second Person of the Trinity – this has eucharistic implications. For Moltmann this doctrine is important not primarily for eucharistic theology but rather for Christology. If the divine nature is shared with the human Jesus of Nazareth, then the suffering of the one is the suffering of both.

the crucified Jesus throughout the ages. Consistently Moltmann draws attention to the fact that the early church and its surrounding culture understood the cross to be a scandal. "The cross is not and cannot be loved" begins Moltmann, noting that only critics like Goethe, Marx, and Nietzsche have identified the deep and fatal irony of Christians decorating their crosses with "roses."[305] Tame approximations of the crucifixion have long eclipsed "the event that took place on Golgotha."[306]. These include "the cult of the cross" (which Moltmann finds primarily in veneration of the mass), "the mysticism of the cross" (in which people seek salvation through self-sacrifice, contemplation, and the *conformitas crucis*), "following the cross" (which replaces the passive suffering of the mysticism of the cross with "active imitation of the crucified Christ"), and "the theology of the cross," which has historically failed to "apprehend the crucified God in…mythical theology…political theology [and] philosophical theology."[307]

Two crises threaten the twentieth century church. To the extent that Christians retreat into "habitual conservatism" and "demanding legalism" they encounter a "crisis of relevance" in the modern world.[308] To the extent that they participate in solidarity with those who fight for social justice they risk sacrificing the particularity of the cross and face a "crisis of identity."[309] Dogmatism and liberalism have been the two dominant modes of (Protestant) Christian expression since well before the liberation of Auschwitz, and the eschatological hope that Moltmann anticipated through the Confessing Church has become detached from the history of the suffering God. Moltmann closes the first section by observing the tendency in Christian

[305] Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 1; 34ff.
[306] Ibid, 41.
[307] Ibid, 41ff.; 45; 53; 73.
[308] Ibid, 8.
[309] Ibid, 19.

theology to underestimate Jesus' humanity, divinity, eschatological embodiment, and messianism.

In the opening section of his book, Moltmann makes the important methodological claim that dialectical theology is the only approach to the doctrine of God that makes sense in light of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Dialectically God and not-God are indivisible in the *Theologia Crucis*, so analogical and philosophical theology cannot give a complete account of the cross.[310] "Without revelation in the opposite, the contradictions cannot be brought into correspondence;" dialectic is the only integrated way to approach the crucified Jesus.[311]

The second section of the book (chapters 4-5) demonstrates the need for a dialectical approach to Jesus. For Moltmann the Christ event is a threefold contradiction: from the vantage point of contemporary Judaism, Jesus was rightly condemned as a blasphemer; from the vantage point of the *Pax Romana* he was rightly executed as an insurrectionist rebel; and most importantly, from the vantage point of inter-Trinitarian life, he was cursed and forsaken by God.[312] Because "blasphemer," "rebel," and "forsaken" are not labels which are associated with traditional theistic ideals, only a dialectical theology is appropriate to Christianity. The fundamental dialectic that emerges in this section is that of the hypostatic union—for Moltmann the crucifixion is the synthesis of the antitheses of human and divine. He criticizes the distinction between Christology and "Jesuology" and the accompanying bifurcation of eschatology and history, universality and particularity, and resurrection and crucifixion. "Either the cross makes every Jesuology and every christology impossible, or else, in association with his resurrection, it

[310] Compare the treatment of Hans Frei and the discussion of competing truth claims in Chapter II.
[311] Moltmann, *Crucified God*,74, 28.
[312] Ibid, 133, 137, 146.

makes Jesuology possible as christology, and christology possible as Jesuology."[313] The verdicts of the "historical trial of Jesus" (which reads history forward to the crucifixion) and the "eschatological trial of Jesus Christ" (which reads history backwards from the resurrection) are one and the same: through this "reciprocal process of identification" Christians learn that "the judgment has been anticipated and by his death has already been decided in favour of the accused."[314]

The eponymous sixth chapter, which comprises more than a quarter of the text of *The Crucified God*, furthers the logic of dialectic by collapsing Christology and the doctrine of the Triune God into one another. Moltmann's theology of the hypostatic union here seems to parallel Karl Rahner's *Grundaxiom* (*vis.*, the immanent Trinity *is* the economic Trinity and the economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity), which Moltmann describes as an important advancement in the doctrine of God.[315] The identification of Jesus Christ's full humanity with his full divinity leads Moltmann to reject many traditional understandings of God, as they are incompatible with the Christ event. He asks, "Which God motivates Christian faith: the crucified God or the gods of religion, race and class?"[316] He dismisses any Christian theology that tries to think of God in traditional theistic terms (whether monotheistic or atheistic, which he considers to be two ways of describing the same concept) or through the lenses of metaphysics, morality, natural theology, or philosophical speculation.[317] Above all, Moltmann works to combat the latent docetism which he roots in the Hellenistic notion of an impassible God and finds cemented in Thomas Aquinas's

[313] Ibid, 124.
[314] Ibid, 168f.
[315] Ibid, 240.
[316] Ibid, 201.
[317] Ibid,, 21; 193; 37; 65; 219.

axiom of *apatheia*.[318] God is not a conceptual object but a personal "event," the event of love witnessed in the historical-eschatological crucifixion of Jesus Christ.[319]

The last section (chapters 7-8) is devoted to demonstrating the concrete, contemporary relevance of the God found in the identity of the Trinity and the crucified Jesus. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis and critique of religion, Moltmann shows how the doctrine of the crucified God is important for contemporary anthropology. Religions predicated on anxiety and insecurity are social psychoses: "the crucified God…breaks the spell of the super-ego which men lay upon him because they need self-protection."[320] Turning to the political realm, Moltmann notes five "vicious circles of death" present in the contemporary world and suggests that through the crucified God Christians might combat them through the pursuit of socialism (to overcome poverty), democracy (to overcome force), emancipation (to overcome social alienation), peace with nature (to overcome environmental alienation), and meaning (to overcome apathy).[321] In this section Moltmann lays out a "theology of liberations" which understands the crucified God to be present in and to particular contemporary sufferings.[322]

It is worth noting that the above partitioning, while hermeneutically useful, is not indigenous to the volume itself. Moltmann considers the book to consist of three parts. For him the first two chapters lay out rationale, background, and methodology. Chapters 3-5 are "christological chapters" that he follows with the final three "systematic chapters which…develop the consequences of this theology of the crucified Christ for the concept of

[318] Ibid, 229.
[319] Ibid, 247; 244.
[320] Ibid, 303.
[321] Ibid, 329ff.
[322] Ibid, 336.

God."[323] Nevertheless, the sixth chapter ("The 'Crucified God'") largely stands on its own, containing—if in abbreviated form—all of the key methodological, theological, and ethical concepts that Moltmann details in the rest of the book. In this seminal chapter he cites Wiesel's famous formulation "Where is [God]? He is here. He is hanging on the gallows;" this quote and the underlying theology can be understood as the experiential / narrative starting point for the book.[324]

Moltmann in Connection to Historical Christian Thought

At this point, we have seen that Moltmann and others grappled with how to understand God in light of the horrors of the twentieth century, and that these historical developments led to the turn to the idea of God as being passible. However, Moltmann also developed his thought in dialogue with, and response to, prior developments in the history of Christian thought. In particular, his idea of a suffering God is built on Luther's theology of the cross, while his methodology draws on the specific dialectical method of neo-Hegelians like Adorno, Horkheimer, and Bloch. Understanding Moltmann's *The Crucified God* in terms of its relationship to those influences opens the text to new theological potential but also constrain its conclusions. Understanding Moltmann's work as developing out of Lutheran thought in

[323] Ibid, 200.

[324] Ibid, 274. The full text of Wiesel's account is: "*Then came the march past the victims. The two men were no longer alive. Their tongues were hanging out, swollen and bluish. But the third rope was still moving: the child, too light, was still breathing...And so he remained for more than half an hour, lingering between life and death, writhing before our eyes. And we were forced to look at him at close range. He was still alive when I passed him. His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet extinguished. Behind me, I heard the same man asking, 'Where is God now?' And I heard a voice within me answer him. 'Where is He? Here He is. He is hanging here on this gallows.'*" Wiessel, *Night* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 64f.

particular sheds light on the way in which he positions himself in the tradition of Christian thought.

The logic of the hypostatic union, understood dialectically and in light of Luther's notion of "the crucified God," leads Moltmann radically to rethink traditional conceptions of God in the Christian tradition. Perhaps the greatest gift in this book is the sustained emphasis on integrated reciprocity: neither thesis nor antithesis consumes the other, and the synthesis neither exhausts nor preferences either. In fact, while Moltmann repeatedly uses the term "dialectic" to describe his method, his ability to synthesize two diametric concepts without relegating either to the realm of "antithesis" allows him to stand in the ancient tradition of the "coincidence of opposites" found in thinkers from Heraclitus to Kant.[325] Therefore many diametric elements of the human experience are held not in creative tension but in paradoxical harmony: e.g., doctrine and politics, God and neighbor, suffering and glory, creation and salvation, temporality and eternity, immanence and transcendence, and social justice and democracy.[326] Moltmann dismisses the extremes of exclusion and monism in favor of community: "if Christian theology is relational, it can find a meaningful way between absolutist theocracy and unproductive tolerance, and replace the previously assumed unity of a society."[327]

The Crucified God sketches anew the boundaries of orthodoxy and heresy. Moltmann takes a hard line against Christian tendencies toward Nestorianism, docetism, and Arianism.[328] His Lutheran Trinitarian position also allows him to avoid Pelagianism and Sebellianism. At the same time, he makes—if carefully—a number of statements that seem to challenge the

[325] Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 5, 27, 253.
[326] Ibid, 22; 24; 28; 67; 122; 321; 336.
[327] Ibid, 11.
[328] Ibid, 181, 231; 227; 229.

boundaries of orthodox Christianity. He tends toward patripassianism ("on the cross not only is Jesus himself in agony, but also…his Father"), subordinationism ("Christ is God's representative over against a world which is not yet fully subject to God"), and dynamic monarchianism ("Jesus became the Son of God with the baptism").[329] With Paul Althaus, Moltmann questions "the theory of the immutability of God" and with Cyril of Alexandria and the early church he asks, "Was it really impossible to ascribe Christ's suffering to God himself?"[330] He ultimately qualifies his thought against strict patripassianism ("the relative definition of his unchangeableness does not lead to the assertion of his absolute and intrinsic unchangeableness"), but the title and thrust of the book remain deliberate challenges to the Platonic *theos apathes* theology that Moltmann finds in Anselm, Maimonides, Aquinas, Spinoza, and even the genesis of Islam.[331]

Questions of orthodoxy aside, perhaps the greatest limit to the potential for *The Crucified God* to forge further theological ground is found in the dialectical relationship between Moltmann's eschatological impulses and Luther's tempering dualism. True, the here-but-not-yet character of Luther's eschatology takes greater account of human suffering than Calvin's realized eschatology and its correlate that Christ becomes "superfluous when the kingdom of God comes" that undergirded *Theology of Hope*.[332] Still, Moltmann is constrained by Luther's theology in his appreciation of works of loving solidarity, the proleptic quality of the mass, God's unconditional love, the immanent presence of the kingdom, the theological integrity of

[329] Ibid, 151; 180; 193.

[330] Ibid, 206; 229.

[331] Ibid, 229; 219; 271; 210; 217; 250. Hunsinger points to the nuanced ways in which Barth engages with figures like Anselm and moments like Chalcedon – Moltmann moves a step beyond classical orthodoxy in his critique of both through his *theologia crucis*.

[332] Ibid, 172; 257ff.

apathetic traditions within Judaism, Islam, and Roman Catholicism, and ecclesiastical kenosis—Christ can become accursed and one who "possessed 'no form or comeliness,'" but the Protestant church seemingly cannot share in this kenosis of identity.[333]

In focusing on Luther, Moltmann dismisses large swaths of the Christian tradition, or else relegates them to having discovered "a truth about Christ" but reserves for the Lutheran line the final word.[334] The theological backbone of *The Crucified God*, that Moltmann identifies early as "the theology of the cross," has only been articulated at specific points in Christian history: it "begins with Paul…then leaps forward to Luther [and] returned to life in a distinctive way in Zinzendorf [then] left its mark on the better side of early dialectical theology and on the Luther renaissance of the 1920s."[335] Martin Luther's exegesis thus thoroughly informs this volume.

Luther informs Moltmann at many points: in addition to borrowing the phrase "the crucified God" from the former, Moltmann relies heavily on "the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*" espoused by Luther, that "made it possible to conceive of God himself in the godforsakenness of Christ and to ascribe suffering and death on the cross to the divine-human person of Christ."[336] On two notable points Moltmann criticizes Luther for not following his theology through to its logical conclusion. Because Luther's Trinitarianism is not developed fully, "he arrived at paradoxical distinctions between God and God: between the God who crucifies and the crucified God; the God who is dead and yet is not dead; between the manifest God in Christ and the hidden God above and beyond Christ."[337] More importantly, Moltmann strongly critiques Luther's handling of the Peasants' Revolt: Luther "did not formulate [the

[333] Ibid, 16; 43; 152; 164; 195, 222, 269, 271 (though contrast 187); 33; 24f.
[334] Ibid, 46.
[335] Ibid, 3.
[336] Ibid, 234.
[337] Ibid, 235.

theologia crucis] as social criticism against feudal society in the Peasant Wars. [His response] did not express the critical and liberating force of the cross…nor the polemic of the crucified God against pride and subjection."[338] Moltmann's willingness to find shortcomings in certain Lutheran doctrines is promising and perhaps a function of his own Hegelian dialectics. Still, one wonders if his doctrine of the crucified God would reach further in developing this vital proto-liberation theology if it were not bound to Martin Luther's dualisms. That being said, this doctrine has important implications for social justice and the ordering of community. A God who suffers *with* calls the haves to do the same and offers solidarity to the have-nots. Moltmann's doctrine of God is thus built on Luther's "crucified God," which, therefore, plays a vital role in laying the groundwork for this theology of liberation. In this way, Moltmann's contribution to thought on God's passibility builds on and emerges out of the Christian tradition into which he writes. In developing his thought using Lutheran concepts as his starting point, Moltmann makes his intervention within the pale of and incontinuity with the Christian theological tradition. Although, as we have seen, various Christian theologians have had a range of views on the issue of divine passibility, Moltmann's emerges as part of this conversation and as a perspective that is authentically grounded in the Christian discourse on God.

Critiques of Moltmann's Passibility

As we have seen, there has been a significant turn toward a theology of a God of *pathos* in the twentieth century; nonetheless, there have been critics of this approach to the divine as well. This section will provide an overview of prominent critical responses to modern

[338] Ibid, 72; cf. 49.

developments in the idea of a passible God. Some have responded to the notion of divine passibility with the critique that, in their view, divine *pathos* is incompatible with divine omnipotence. In other words, they claim that a God who *cannot* suffer passibly is a God who *can* save—and omnipotence is vital in a salvation economy, normatively conceived. Some who resist passibility see it as incompatible with omnipotence. According to advocates for impassibility, God the Son's divinity rests on his immunity to passibility. Jesus can—and indeed does—suffer in his corporeal nature, but the incorporeal Second Person is not subject to passion. Thomas Weinandy (b. 1946) is an American Capuchin priest who writes prominently about impassibility, with two major works on the subject: *Does God Suffer?* and its follow-up, *Does God Change?* Although Weinandy gives a charitable reading to Moltmann, Abraham Heschel (d. 1972), James Cone (d. 2018) and other proponents of passibility, he ultimately comes down on the side of impassibility.[339] "I believe that a passible God is actually less personal, loving, dynamic and active than an impassible God...This study will attempt to demonstrate this, seemingly, paradoxical thesis."[340] He restates this: "Only an impassible God is truly loving...it is precisely the human suffering of the Son of God that is truly redemptive."[341] For Weinandy, the impassible God is replete with passionate love, which signals either a departure from or a softening of what I would call "strict impassibility"—this recalls Origen's paradox discussed above.[342] According to commentators, there is more than one way to arrive at impassibility, and Weinandy's qualified

[339] Richard Bauckham, "Only the Suffering God can Help: Divine Passibility in Modern Theology," in *Themelios*, vol. 9 no.3 (1984), 7.

[340]Thomas G. Weinandy . *Does God Suffer?* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000). Cf. D.G. Attfield, "Can God be Crucified? A Discussion of J. Moltmann" in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* No. 30 (1977), 47ff.

[341] Weinandy . "Does God Suffer?" in *Ars Disputandi* 2:1 (2002), p. 1.

[342] By "strict" impassibility I mean a guard against passion: change, suffering, love, etc. See the introduction for my five-fold criteria for passibility.

approach is one which is more in line with Chalcedon than Moltmann's.[343] Thomas F. Torrance (d. 2007) joins Weinandy in this reaffirmation of the classical doctrine of impassibility. Following Cyril, he believes that God "suffers impassibly."[344] Torrance parallels Barth's theology:

> "[I]t is God the Father who suffers in the offering and sending of his Son in his abasement. The suffering is not his own, but the alien suffering of the creature, of man, which he takes to himself in the Son. But he does suffer it in the humiliation of his Son with a depth with which it never was or will be suffered by any man - apart from the One who is his Son."[345]

As these scholars' work demonstrates, there remains in Christianity a strong instinct to preserve the doctrine of God from passibility. Indeed, some conclude in accord with Cyril of Alexandria that, "the Word had to be immutable and impassible in order to be divine."[346] This has Christological implications: "Cyril expresses the freedom to cross the line of [Theodore of Mopsuestia's] distinction—even while maintaining the distinction—in the paradox of the God-man Jesus Christ, a union he constantly emphasizes is ineffable and beyond comprehension."[347]

To sum up critiques of Moltmann's theology as expounded in *The Crucified God*, some have seen his thought as departing too radically from the Chalcedonian tradition and failing to respect accepted Christian thought (though others affirm his work as being an innovative response to this tradition). Some theologians read Moltmann's work and engage with it yet

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[343] Cf. Anthony "Does God Suffer?", 422.

[344] Torrance 250. Cyril of Alexandria's theology of the two natures of Christ is, for Moltmann, insufficient, because it ignores the reality of the hypostatic union in the moment of crucifixion.

[345] Barth in Man Kei Ho . *A Critical Study of T. F. Torrance's Theology of Incarnation* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2008), 177.

[346] Hallman 372.

[347] Joel C. Elowsky . "Bridging the Gap" in *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology, Vol. 2* . ed Vladimir Kharlamov (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 179.

remain unconvinced by Moltmann's vision of divine passibility.[348] Moltmann has also been accused of patripassianism; he responds by coining the term "patricompassianism:" the Father *does* suffer, but not like the son.[349] Still, Dennis Jowers contends that Moltmann's premise that love involves suffering is "unprovable"—a classically construed deity is capable of feeling.[350] He further argues that Moltmann' theology undermines the doctrine of the Trinity by undermining two natures christology.[351] Moltmann's argument has also been seen as lacking in clarity on some points; Bauckham for one has responded by building on Moltmann's work in an affirmative way to follow through on these points.[352] Indeed, many scholars have found Moltmann to be convincing and have joined Bauckham in affirming Moltmann's view of divine passibility; the next section will explore these affirmations.

Affirmations of Moltmann's Passibility

The idea of a passible God has strong proponents in twentieth century theology. Historically, many theologians have tied suffering to corporeality, but contemporary theory has separated the two. As Emery recognizes, "Both contemporary theology and the preaching associated with it seem to accord an ever-increasing place to the theme of the 'suffering' of the triune God."[353] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died in 1945 at the hands of the Nazis, famously wrote

[348] Weinandy 2002, 3.

[349] Sarot 372.

[350] Dennis Jowers . "The Theology of the Cross as Theology of the Trinity: a critique of Jûrgen Moltmann's staurocentric trinitarianism" in *Tyndale Bulletin* 52.2 (2001), 254.

[351] Jowers 245.

[352] Giambrone, "Neo-Arians," 377.

[353] Giles Emery, "The Immutability of the God of Love and the Problem of Language Concerning the 'Suffering God'" in Keating and White 27. Theologians often draw attention to the case of Lazarus and its Trinitarian ramifications, as in Robert Duncan Culver . *The Impassibility of God: Cyril of Alexandria to Moltmann* in the Christian Apologetics Journal, Vol. 1, No.1 (Southern Evangelical Seminary, 1998), 4.

from prison, “Man’s religiosity makes him look in his distress to the power of God in the world; he uses God as a deus ex machina. The Bible, however, directs us to the powerlessness and suffering of God; only a suffering God can help.”[354] In the same vein Kazō Kitamori (d. 1998), a Japanese Lutheran, argued forcefully that a God who does not share the pain of a humanity reeling from Hiroshima and Nagasaki is unintelligible.[355] Within the Jewish tradition, Heschel and others have suggested that the God of the Hebrew Bible is a God of “pathos.”[356]

More recently, theologians have looked specifically to Moltmann to anchor their arguments for divine passibility and their response to the Chalcedonian view.[357] Contemporary Catholic theologians James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White note the significance of Moltmann's intervention into this debate, writing that his work constitutes an influential and major challenge to the Chalcedonian creed and its doctrine of divine impassibility Moltmann has caused other theologians to rethink the classical understanding of Christ’s two natures as well as divine passion. Keating and White write:

> This “two-natures” Christology, however, has faced some significant and interesting challenges in contemporary christological reflection. Most noteworthy on this score is the reflection of Jürgen Moltmann, who suggests that the “abstract” Chalcedonian theology of the two natures of Christ can and ought to be abandoned today (or realistically rethought) precisely because it suggests an apparently inevitable “moral distance” between God and his creation. This alterity is in fact the conceptual residue of a non-biblical ontology, inherited from Hellenistic sources. Classical Chalcedonian theology, in this view, is imprisoned by a portrayal of the deity insufficiently receptive to the biblical understanding of God’s compassion and solidarity. It is because God reveals to us “what” he is *precisely and only in the crucifixion* that we can understand in turn that he is truly

[354] Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Letters and Papers from Prison* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2010), 535.

[355] Kitamori, *Pain of God*, 33.

[356] Cf. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper, 1969), 26.

[357] For a parallel to Moltmann’s thought, consider Jung Young Lee . *God Suffers for Us: A Systematic Inquiry into a Concept of Divine Passibility* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 19: the twentieth century theologian Jung Young Lee discusses divine passibility. He writes, “Since the inner disharmony in Agape [unconditional love] corresponds to the suffering as an inward experience, we are readily convinced to affirm that God as Agape is passible. That is to say that the God whose true nature is Agape is capable of suffering.”

> "capable" of radically identifying with our suffering, even in his very being, "essence," and inner life.[358]

Moltmann's nuance here challenges two natures Christology and therefore the Calcedonian Creed. Furthermore, he challenges the "moral distance" between God and humanity. Hellenistic impassibility, in this case, contrasts with biblical *pathos*. In the Crucifixion God identifies with human suffering. Moltmann prefers the biblical narrative as a means for understanding God's *pathos*, and as we shall see, this will have great implications for the restoration, liberation, and salvation of a suffering world. This is contrary to those who seek recourse to metaphorical interpretations; Moltmann gives a plain reading to biblical divine passion. Keating and White find Moltmann persuasive on the doctrine of divine passion:

> The greater the abasement of Christ in his passion, the more the greatness of God's kenotic love is revealed. If one conceives of the two natures of Christ as distinguishable yet analogically coordinated, then the sufferings of the human nature manifest and reveal the perfections of the divine nature without being reducible to the latter.[359]

For Moltmann, the crucifixion not only manifests but also propels God's love. Keating and White continue, saying of the doctrine of impassibility:

> [T]his in turn raises the specter of 'tri-theism,' since the persons of God are distinct in the historistical economy but in no clear way immanently one in themselves. Monotheism is thereby rendered conceptually unstable. To avoid such instability, one is again compelled to think about ways in which the actions and sufferings of the man Jesus in his humanity are in fact revelatory of his transcendent nature, his divine life shared with the Father and the Holy Spirit.[360]

Keating and Whiting affirm that, "Moltmann does not retreat, as his critics might suggest, into the pre-philosophical world of Homer…Rather, he affirms the 'passionate love' in

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[358] Keating, James F. and Thomas Joseph White, eds. Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 14.

[359] Keating and White 19.

[360] *Ibid.* 16f.

dialectical relationship to a doctrine of impassibility."[361] According to this interpretation of Moltmannian thought, distinguishing Father from Son *absolutely* threatens the unity of the Godhead. While Moltmann does distinguish between the *suffering* of the Father and the Son, he links them together at Golgotha.

These theologians are not alone in affirming Moltmann on the subject of this doctrine. Richard Bauckham (b. 1946) has written extensively on Moltmann's theology. In his *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* he attempts to qualify Moltmann's theology of divine suffering while at the same time affirming it. He identifies in the Moltmannian *theologia crucis* three themes that Moltmann does not spell out explicitly but that are subdermally at work in the latter's thought: "the passion of Christ…the nature of love [and] the problem of human suffering."[362] For Bauckham these three themes are intermixed and demand a doctrine of a suffering God.

Baptist theologian Paul Fiddes (b. 1947), too, builds on Moltmann's work. He draws on words like "sympathy" and "compassion," etymologically meaning "feeling with," to show that God's *love for* creation implies God's changing, suffering, and feeling *alongside it*. He writes, "…if God is not less than personal, and if the claim that 'God is love' is to have any recognizable continuity with our normal experience of love, the conclusion seems inescapable that a loving God must be a sympathetic and therefore suffering God."[363] This sympathy and suffering are not simply for God in God's Triune economy but for that very creation that is wholly Other. He states,

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[361] Keating and White 85.

[362] Bauckham 47ff.

[363] Fiddes 17. Cf. the rhetorical question in Keating and White 18: "...does the 'outer' suffering of God on the cross reveal the 'inner' presence of an intense love in God himself, one that we might describe by the similitude of 'vulnerability'?"

> J. Moltmann speaks of God as revealing himself in what is most unlike himself, in "Godlessness and abandonment by God", for if God revealed himself in what was exactly like him then only God could know God. This insight leads Moltmann to a contemporary Christian ethic, urging the Christian church not simply to look for the like-minded in making its fellowship, but to offer an open friendship to those who are quite unlike it in order to share fellowship with the crucified Christ.[364]

For Fiddes, then, ethics derives from a Moltmannian Trinitarianism, from God's immanence, from Christ's sacrifice. Here again a theologian builds on Moltmann's crucial insight that the Triune Godhead suffers in the death of Christ.

Finally, Barth scholar Rosalene Bradbury finds Moltmann convincing. In her *Cross Theology: The Classical Theologia Crucis and Karl Barth's Modern Theology of the Cross* she writes:

> Major German Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann in his 1972 article The Crucified God explores eschatological and trinitarian themes in relation to the death of Jesus Christ. In doing so Moltmann melts God's triune work on the cross and the theology of the cross, so that the latter is effectively a theology of triune sacrificial atonement.[365]

For Bradbury, Trinity and crucifixion are intimately linked so that the event of Jesus' execution reveals something about the innerworkings of the divine economy. Theologians like those cited above have adopted Moltmann's conviction that God prefers to care for the suffering and is in solidarity with them. Moltmann is a major and influential voice in this theological conversation, someone for whom passibility is not merely academic but also has to do with the experience of the human condition. Though driven by theological principals, he is grounded in the reality of human suffering. Moltmann is deeply embedded in Christian discourse about the divine and situates his work in this way, building on Luther's Cross theology, and yet he is also deeply

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[364] *Ibid.* 30f.

[365] Bradbury, Rosalene. *Cross Theology: The Classical Theologia Crucis and Karl Barth's Modern Theology of the Cross* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 17f.

connected to that which is beyond the academic debate: the tangible reality of the suffering of living beings.

Moltmann's dialectical preference for the suffering, which cannot be over-emphasized, remains the fundamental advancement of his *magnum opus*. His "stateless and classless God" is important for this dissertation: the God who suffers alongside humanity, and through that suffering redeems "the poor, the oppressed and the humiliated," is simultaneously immanent and salvific.[366] To cite Gregory of Nazianzus, "that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved."[367] This union of the immanent and the transcendent is crucial for Moltmann. An analogue begins to emerge in a close reading of stories of Ḥusayn's martyrdom; the next three chapters will explore the mingling between human and divine in this passion as remembered by the early Twelver community. This will be an important concept in the coming chapters in which, I argue, the slaying of Ḥusayn similarly reveals something about the Islamic Godhead. Chapter IV will lay out *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* as a genre of religious text. Chapter V establishes Ḥusayn as a liminal figure in whom the mundane and the divine mingle. It does so by looking closely at the theme of liquids flowing into and out of human bodies, including Ḥusayn's, in the Karbalāʾ narratives. This motif establishes Ḥusayn as a liminal hero; it makes manifest both his mundane and his cosmological dimensions. Chapter VI builds on the result of this analysis to explore cosmic passibility in these accounts of Ḥusayn's life and passion, ultimately showing that they depict God and cosmic beings as being eminently passible. With Moltmannian thought as a hermeneutical lens, and using the methodology

[366] Moltmann 1974, 329.

[367] Gregory of Nazianzus, "Critique of Apollinarius and Apollinarianism" Epistle 101 https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/gregoryofnaz_critique_of_apolliniarianism.htm

presented isn Chapter II as a methodological driver, this dissertation now turns to the story of Ḥusayn.

Chapter IV: "A Poisoned Arrow with Three Heads": Contextualizing Devotion to Ḥusayn

This chapter introduces and historically situates the three late Abbasid era *maqātil* that the next two chapters will analyze, in order to establish Ḥusayn as a liminal hero and locate divine passibility in these texts. The introductory chapter of this dissertation addressed the first two major leadership crises in the nascent Islamic community: Who should succeed Muḥammad? and, Who should succeed ʿAlī? Here we begin with a third: who should succeed Muʿāwiya as caliph? The candidates were Muʿāwiya's son Yazīd I and ʿAlī's son Ḥusayn. Disagreement at this point led to the drama of Karbalāʾ. I begin this chapter by outlining the historical circumstances of this drama—its catalysts, its events, and its significance for the rise of the Shīʿa tradition. I turn then to the early *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* as a whole, presenting first the major figures in the narrative (see the Appendix for a list of their roles in the battle), then moving to the history of the literary genre. I define four "generations" of early *maqātil*; the late Abbasid texts represent the fourth.

In the subsequent section of this chapter, I trace the gradual elevation of Ḥusayn's status as the *maqtal* genre developed. This historical tracing demonstrates that he is depicted as being at his most liminal in the late Abbasid era. Early *maqātil* portray Ḥusayn as being eminently human, and in post-classical *maqātil* he becomes super-human. However, in the late Abbasid texts, he appears as a liminal figure, at once straddling the realms of the earthly and the cosmic. I then explain why I have selected three Abbasid *maqtal* texts as the most appropriate sources for highlighting Ḥusayn's liminality and, therefore, for developing a theology from below that involves divine passibility. In order to situate these texts historically, I move next to presenting

an overview of contemporary scholarship on *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*, *maqātil* texts more broadly (beyond *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*), and the three late Abbasid compilers on whose works I will focus.

Finally, I turn to a final historical point, a crucial one for situating this project within the larger field of Islamic studies. The last section of this chapter (the excursus) demonstrates that the implications of this dissertation are significant beyond the bounds of Twelver Shi'i thought. Not all admirers of Ḥusayn can be classified as Twelver Shīʿites; Ḥusayn has also been considered an important figure by Islamic scholars more broadly, and this perceived significance is demonstrated in the writing of three foundational Abbasid scholars, al-Ṭabarī (discussed at length), al-Iṣfahānī, and al-Khwārizmī. I address the identities of these three thinkers, showing that contemporary scholarship on them, as well as views they express in some of their writings, indicate that they have pro-ʿAlid sympathies, although the general classification of them has not been that they are Twelver Shīʿites, normatively defined. These scholars' writings have been influential in subsequent Islamic thought; showing that pro-Alid views are woven into their work suggests that at the moments when Ḥusayn's status was being negotiated there was a sectarian fluidity, and further, that the views espoused by ʿAlid sympathizers may be more ingrained in mainstream Islamic thought than one might initially think. Thus, the conclusions of this dissertation are, I maintain, not restricted to Twelverism; they have a bearing on the ways that ideas and figures important to Islamic thought are understood more generally. This chapter lays the groundwork necessary for undertaking an analytical reading of late Abbasid *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*, which is the subject of the next two chapters.

Sectarian Negotiation Leading Up to Karbalāʾ

In this section I describe the pro-ʿAlid movement in the early centuries of Islam, culminating with the rise of Twelverism, which helps us to understand the *maqātil* in their historical context. I begin with the foundational Shīʿa catalyst, the death of Ḥusayn (the event central to the *maqātil*). In the generations following the death of the Prophet Muḥammad in 632, a series of succession crises arose in the nascent Muslim community, described in detail in the introductory chapter. Here now is an account of the day of ʿAshurāʾ in year 61 after the Hijra. "The event of Karbalāʾ is *not* a dramatic battle on the banks of the Euphrates, but rather its narrative crystallization," writes Antoine Borrut.[368] His assessment of the Karbalāʾ legend is more than a mere truism; it is important to remain mindful of the differences between history and hagiography. What may or may not have occurred, historically, early in the month of Muḥarram in the 61st year of Islam is not the central concern of *maqtal* compilers, especially fledgling Twelvers of the late Abbasid era. Historical events (and ahistorical additions and amendments) certainly serve as the backbone for these accounts, but as Karbalāʾ developed as a theological event and paradigm, the *interpretation* of these data ascended in importance: Ḥusayn's sacrifice became an act of utmost importance for the Shīʿa community—this community was to become defined by his redemptive act. The following is a sketch of this development.

Several overlapping eras of Islamic history are germane to the development of the *maqtal* genre. To paraphrase Weber, sacred traditions tend to crystalize as institutions as time progresses, and this is certainly how the concept of the "partisans of ʿAlī" (*Shīʿat ʿAlī*) cemented as the denomination now known as Shīʿism. Scholars disagree about when Shīʿism as a distinct sectarian identity emerged, but most agree that it was centuries removed from Ḥusayn's

[368] Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ," 252.

martyrdom. This challenges the popular narrative that Sunnīs and Shīʿīs split over the question of Muḥammad's successor and have been engaging in bitter competition since then. The paradigm of perpetual conflict assumes an early and decisive break between these two Islamic instantiations with little room for cross-pollination or murky spaces between the traditions. Scholars attempt to nuance this story by talking of a "pro-ʿAlid" persuasion present before Sunnism crystallized in the tenth or eleventh century. While the term *ahl al-sunna* can be traced back to the early eighth century, it seems all but certain that such a self-identification would not have resonated with most "mainstream" Muslims even in the ninth.[369] Likewise, scholars are tempted to assume that very early Shīʿism polarized the *umma* with its claims about ʿAlī and the Imamate.

Scholars variously locate the emergence of a defined, bounded party of ʿAlī either with the crisis of the Prophet's succession (632, Madelung), the passion of Ḥusayn (680, Watt), the rebellion of Zayd ibn ʿAlī (740, Haider), or Hishām ibn Ḥakam's development of a Shīʿī doctrine of the Imamate (c.750, Kohlberg). Imāmī / Twelver Shīʿism is conceded to be a later development (c. ninth to thenth centuries, Calder), but this does not sufficiently challenge the implicit notion that early Muslims were either Shīʿite or not Shīʿite. Najam Haider has tried to reconceptualize this paradigm by positing that *all* early Muslims were "Shīʿites" divided over the nature of the community's leader.[370] Those who saw this leader as a tribal *shaykh* constituted the Shīʿat ʿUthmān; those who regarded him as an imperial monarch made up the Shīʿat Muʿāwiya; those who believed him to inherit the Prophet's spiritual offices were the Shīʿat ʿAlī. This early

[369] G.H.A. Juynboll, "Sunna," in *Encyclopedia of Islam 2.* This term was first used by Ibn Sīrīn (d. 728) and perpetuated by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), though Muslims largely did not self-identify as Sunnī or Shīʿī for some time after Ibn Ḥanbal's era; in the Abbasid era considerable fluidity existed, as the excursus of this chapter will demonstrate. Compare Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (New York: Routledge, 1981), 40.

[370] Haider, *Shīʿism*, 51ff.

trifurcation assumes a distinction between an early political persuasion (Shīʿat ʿAlī) and a much later sectarian identity (Shīʿite).

Even if "normative" Shīʿism is Imāmī Twelverism, this category does not trace back to the days of ʿAlī and Ḥusayn. Those who charged with Ḥusayn into battle might best be referred to as "pro-ʿAlids;" Shīʿites in the sense that they were partisans of ʿAlī (*shīʿat ʿAlī*) but not a discernably distinct sect within Islam. Today's Shīʿa are roughly divided into four groups: the "Fivers" or Zaydīs found predominantly in Yemen, the "Seveners" or Ismāʿīlīs who themselves are largely either Nizārīs or Dāwoodīs and are concentrated in the Subcontinent; the "Twelvers" or Imāmīs who make up sizeable populations in countries such as Iran and Iraq; and the "extremists" or *ghulāt* who include everything from Turkey's Alevis to Syria's Alawites to any number of remnant sects that believe God to be incarnate in one of the Imams. Indeed, even distinct groups like the Bahāʾī and the Druze are offshoots of one form of Shīʿism or another. Of importance here, though, is what the pro-ʿAlid movement looked like at the end of the Abbasid era. At this time the difference between Zaydī and Imāmī is of some import. "Fiver" Zaydīs disagreed with "Twelver" Imāmīs on the legitimate successor to the fourth Imam, ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, who had survived the battle of Karbalāʾ because he was too sick to fight. The majority of pro-ʿAlids favored Muḥammad al-Bāqir, paternal grandson of Ḥusayn and maternal grandson of Ḥasan, while a sizeable minority recognized ʿAlī's son Zayd as the rightful heir. While this distinction might seem semantic, the direction that the two lines of successive Imams took is far from it. Zaydism, which recognizes a line of Imams beginning with Zayd, is inherently political, teaching that the Imam at any given time need merely be a descendant of the Prophet, not necessarily the son of the previous Imam. This Imam proves his mettle by resisting—by force, if necessary—unjust political apparatuses within the *umma*. Twelvers—

whose line of succession passed from al-Bāqir to his son Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq and continued until the twelfth—took a more quietist approach, their Imams typically being martyred and often living under house arrest—their quills, not their quivers, were their offensive accessories. The Twelver community, which owes much of its identity to the jurisprudential teachings of the sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, was only beginning to coalesce into a distinct Shīʿite branch as the Abbasid Caliphate started to disintegrate. Ibn Ṭāwūs and Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī represent distinctively Jaʿfarī / Twelver Shīʿism to a degree that cannot be said of Abū Mikhnaf, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Iṣfahānī. We will turn to these compilers shortly.

Key Agents in the Ḥusayn Narrative[371]

ʿAshurāʾ plays a pivotal role in Shīʿī thought and devotion: the first ten days of the month of Muharram are a focal point for the partisans of ʿAlī. Here, I lay out the key figures in the drama of Ḥusayn's passion: Muslim ibn ʿAqīl, Ḥusayn's sons (all named ʿAlī), the women in Ḥusayn's camp, the Umayyad officers, and Imam Ḥusayn himself. This outlining is important because these characters help us to understand the coalesced hagiographical Karbalāʾ narrative; all will appear repeatedly in the coming chapters.

The *maqtal* writers develop the theme of Ḥusayn as a righteous martyr rather than a defeated military leader. Their framing of his supporters' actions further serves their purposes. Acording to the collective memory of Ḥusayn's supporters, the first to die in the saga did so well in advance of ʿĀshūrāʾ. The Imam had dispatched his first cousin Muslim ibn ʿAqīl to Kūfa on a

[371] See the Appendix for a list of the most prominent figures in the ʿĀshūrāʾ drama.

reconnaissance mission to ascertain the people's enthusiasm for his arrival.[372] A crowd of 30,000 pledged their support for Ḥusayn—Ḥusayn is said to have received the same number of letters from Kūfa while he was in Mecca—but the governor took action to suppress this mutiny. Muslim took refuge in the home of a sympathetic old man, Hānī ibn ʿUrwa. Through espionage of their own, Kūfan officials discovered that Hānī was harboring Muslim. Even when interrogated Hānī refused to betray his guest and prevented Muslim *and* his adversaries from killing each other in his house.[373] According to this narrative, this unrepented treasonous act led to the beheading of the old man. Muslim, armed and hunted, tried to escape from the city but the governor ordered the gates barricaded, and when Muslim finally came before the governor he was gravely wounded.[374] He surrendered his sword on the promise of clemency, which was then broken. City officials took him to a rooftop, beheaded him, and threw his corpse into the town square. Kūfa was not going to be a welcoming city. Though news of this event grieved him and though his foot soldiers began deserting until the poignant number 72 remained, Ḥusayn marched forward with his family and loyalist companions toward Kūfa. His progress would be arrested on the plains of Karbalāʾ.

Foremost among the characters in the Karbalāʾ narrative is Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who is considered by most Shīʿites to be Muḥammad's viceroy and as such the first Imam. Ḥusayn is said to have been born in 626 and was therefore a young child when the Prophet died. The Imam had four wives, three daughters, and three sons. Two of the daughters were named for his mother Fāṭima, and all three sons were named ʿAlī. Especially this latter redundancy presents

[372] Haider, *Shīʿism*, 69; Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 27f.; Muslim's two adolescent sons fought and died at Karbalāʾ, which particularly grieved Ḥusayn.
[373] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 41.
[374] Ibid, 57f.; 27f.

considerable confusion for later *maqtal* writers as well as contemporary scholars. There is no consensus on the age of the youngest son, but he may have been an infant: many *maqātil* locate him in Ḥusayn's arms when he was pierced by either a spear or arrows. The eldest ʿAlī, ʿAlī al-Akbar, died fighting for his father's cause on the plains of Karbalāʾ. Ḥusayn's successor Imam was the middle son ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn ("ornament of the faithful"), who, due to an illness that kept him in the tents with the women, was by most *maqtal* accounts the only male to survive Karbalāʾ. His mother is believed by Shīʿites to have been the princess Shahrbānū, also known as Solāfa.[375] While the historicity of her biography is frequently challenged, the conventional narrative is that she was a daughter of Yazdegerd III, who was a Persian, a Zoroastrian, and the final Sassanid emperor. She is purported to have been captured and taken westward as a slave and purchased by Ḥusayn. She is said variously to have died bearing ʿAlī al-Akbar or to have survived long enough to have been present at the battle of Karbalāʾ.[376]

The most prominent women at the battle in the *maqātil* were Zaynab bint ʿAlī, Ḥusayn's full sister, and Fāṭima al-Kubrā, also known as Sakīna bint Ḥusayn, daughter by his wife Rubāb bint Imriʾ al-Qays.[377] Three days before the battle this daughter of Ḥusayn wed the son of Ḥasan al-Qāsim ibn Ḥasan; he would die nobly in the battle. Sakīna is commemorated for her attempt to secure drinking water for their camp—she sent Ḥusayn's half-brother al-Abbas ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib on a secret mission to the Euphrates. Al-Abbas made it to the water source but not back to

[375] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Šahrbānu," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, New York: The Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 2005: https://iranicaonline.org/articles/sahrbanu.

[376] There is significant confusion among both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars about the number and fate of Ḥusayn's sons (all being named ʿAlī). Specifically, there is disagreement about the identity of ʿAlī al-Akbar. Abū Mikhnaf reports that he was martyred, though various scholars (Iṣfahānī, Mufid, Ṭabarī, and others) think he was Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, survivor of the battle and the fourth Twelver Imam. Hamid Mavani reports that his mother was Layla bint Abī Murrah al-Thaqafī, though most sources consider her to be the Sassanian princess Shahrbānū bint Yazdegerd III. Cf. Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 160 n. 59.

[377] Sakīna is sometimes rendered Sukayna.

the camp; a number of traditions describe the various ways in which he might have been killed.[378] Both Zaynab and Sakīna grieved heavily in their tented camp at Karbalāʾ, and both were among the prisoners paraded to the Levant after the battle and played a prominent role in its aftermath. Zaynab features heavily in later engagements with the Caliph Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya. Sources are in different accords about whether Yazīd later repented and whether he is truly to blame for Ḥusayn's death or whether the guilty parties were more proximate to the battle. Yazīd offered the governorship of Kūfa to ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād on the condition that he confront Ḥusayn with an ultimatum. The grandson of a prostitute and one of her six possible clients, Ibn Ziyād's reputation and status improved drastically when he won the favor of Yazīd's father Muʿāwiya.[379]

Ibn Ziyād assigned ʿUmar ibn Saʿd as the general responsible for carrying out Yazīd's orders. Favoring diplomacy, Ibn Saʿd resented his hawkish subordinate Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan for advocating a violent resolution. Ibn Saʿd scolded Shimr for his scheming: "I think that you influenced Ibn Ziyād against my proposal to him and as a result have spoiled our efforts to correct this matter. Ḥusayn will never submit, for he is endowed with a proud spirit and self-esteem."[380] Various *maqātil* depict Ibn Saʿd as conflicted—he feared reprisal for disobeying Ibn Ziyad's orders, but he also sympathized with the peaceful approach advocated by another of his officers: a leading Kūfan tribesman named al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Tamīmī.[381] When Ḥurr saw that his protests were in vain, he defected to Ḥusayn's side and begged Ḥusayn's forgiveness: "I have

[378] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 134.

[379] Ibid, 134.

[380] Ibid, 114.

[381] Ibid, 135; Jean Calmard, "Ḥorr-e Riahi al-Riāḥi al-Ḥorr b. Yazīd," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, New York: The Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation (2004), https://iranicaonline.org/articles/horr-e-riahi.. Cf. Johann W. Fück, Ibn Saʿd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman *et. al*., Brill Online (2014), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ibn-sad-SIM_3343.

offered my soul a choice between heaven and hell. By God, I will not give priority to anything in relation to heaven, even if it entails that I be cut to bits."[382] Ḥusayn replied, "May God accept your repentance and forgive you…You are a free man [*Ḥurr*], just as your mother named you. God willing, you are free in this life and in the hereafter."[383] In a show of solidarity, Ḥurr invited Ḥusayn to lead his Umayyad army in prayers, which include words of peace spoken to fellow Muslims.[384] This peace was restricted in scope, of course, and Ḥurr would soon add his name to the list of martyrs, being cut down in the battle by his former soldiers.[385] Shimr, on the other hand, had been a pro-ʿAlid who had later joined the Umayyad ranks, and thus he is reviled by the *maqtal* writers for his role in Ḥusayn's brutal martyrdom at the end of the battle. Shimr was notorious for his bloodlust and cruelty; Abū Mikhnaf refers to him as the "son of one who discharges from both ends."[386]

These figures emanate from the primordial past upon which the Karbalāʾ narrative has been based, but with the passage of time and the coalescing of the sect of ʿAlī's party as a counter movement to the religion of the ruling Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, the communal memory of the characters and events associated with Ḥusayn's death grew more dramatic, polarized, and intricate. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than with Ḥusayn himself; he grows from being a principled rebel to being a cosmic phenomenon, a liminal hero. This hero, I argue in chapters V and VI, is a window into the divine through which we can see God's passibility.

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[382] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 92; Apparently Ḥurr's diplomatic technique was to compromise: "I never imagined that the people would reject your proposals and come to this state of affairs. I justified my behavior by saying to myself that I was justified to obey these people on some issues, for perhaps, they will not consider me disobedient and, in the final analysis, they will accept one of your proposals." Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 136f.

[383] Ḥurr's name comes from an Arabic root connoting freedom.

[384] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 91.

[385] Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 115.

[386] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 134, 154, 167.

For now, it will be useful to connect the historical event of Karbalāʾ to the development of the *maqtal* genre.

Generations of Umayyad and Abbasid *Maqātil*

First Generation: Early Maqātil

Here we move from a synchronic narration of the key events preceding Karbalāʾ to a diachronic overview of the ways that this story came to be told over time, especially in Ḥusayn's martyrologies. *Maqtal* as a genre existed prior to the Islamic age, and specific *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* emerged as early as the late Umayyad era.[387] I.K.A. Howard lists a number of early *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* writers, including Abū Mikhnaf and a number of his sources and preservers who died between the first and fifth Islamic centuries, noting differences in historical details among the different accounts.[388] These discrepancies are typically minor, such as *isnād* (chain of transmission) variants and the order of some events. Howard partitions these works into eight major units that he synthesizes from the *maqātil.*

[387] *Maqātil* as a genre far predate the martyrdoms of the Prophet's family. In fact, al-Iṣfahānī refers to "pre-Islamic *maqātil.*" I.K.A. Howard, "Ḥusayn, the Martyr: Accounts of the Martyrdom in Arabic Sources," in *Papers from the Imam Ḥusayn Conference, London, July 1984* (London: Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1986), https://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/vol-12-no-1-spring-1986/arabic-accounts-al-husayns-martyrdom-ian-keith-anderson-howard, 2. Sebastian Günther describes four stages in the development of the genre: (1) a pre-literary stage, in pre-Islamic and early Islamic culture, both oral and written; (2) compilations by early "Shīʿite" historians as codified texts in the early 2nd/8th century; (3) the proliferation of Sunnī and Shīʿī histories, biographies, and genealogies from the mid-2nd/8th century through early 4th/10th century; and (4) the maturity of the genre (Günther 208ff.). For him true *maqtal* texts are historical rather than hagiographical in nature, which precludes the inclusion of the late Abbasid contributions of al-Khwarizmi, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, and Ibn Ṭāwūs. He does, however, note a Persian revival of the genre during the 10th/16th century under the Ṣafavids, "whence it has influenced Shīʿite narrative literature in Turkish and Urdu as well as the performance of Shīʿite mourning-assemblies and passion plays." Sebastian Günther, "Maqâtil Literature in Medieval Islam," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. XXV (1994), 210. Antoine Borrut follows Günther in not classifying the late Abbasid texts as proper *maqātil*, arguing that the genre culminated with al-Iṣfahānī's 10th century *Maqātil al-ṭālibiyyin.* Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ," 252.

[388] Howard, "Accounts," 1f.

(i) the situation prior to the death of Mu`awiya after the death of the Imam al-Husayn [*sic*];

(ii) Yazid's succession and his attempt to get the Imam al-Husayn to pay homage to him, followed by the latter's retreat to Mecca;

(iii) the letters to the Imam al-Husayn from [Kufa];

(iv) the mission of Muslim b. `Aqil to Kufa and the appointment and activities of Ibn Ziyad as governor of Kufa;

(v) the Imam al-Husayn's journey to Karbala;

(vi) negotiations with `Umar b. Sa`d and the Kufan army;

(vii) the battle and the death of the Imam al-Husayn;

(viii) the desecration of his head and the treatment of his family.[389]

According to Howard, the earliest known account is by one of ʿAlī's companions, al-Aṣbagh ibn Nubāta, a Kūfan who died shortly after Ḥusayn and whose work survives only through a handful of references in al-Kalbī's *maqtal*. Al-Juʿfī's narrative of Ḥusayn's martyrdom is similarly all but lost to time, preserved fragmentarily through al-Iṣfahānī. ʿAmmār ibn Muʿāwiya ad-Duhnī (d. c. 751) presents a version of events that almost perfectly corresponds to that of al- Kalbī; Ibn Muʿāwiya cites the fifth Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir as his source. Howard also mentions ʿAwāna ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam al-Kalbī (d. 871, not to be confused with Hishām ibn al-Kalbī who died in either 819 or 821).[390]

Many early *maqātil* are known but either have been lost or are only partially preserved in the writings of others. By Howard's count, there are five *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* that predate Abū Mikhnaf's monumental work from the mid-second Islamic century. Fragments of Ibn Nubāta's account (as mediated through his son al-Qāsim) are preserved by Hishām ibn al-Kalbī, Abū

[389] Ibid," 2.

[390] Cf. J.E. Luebering, "Hishām ibn al-Kalbī" in in Kara Rogers, ed., *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2007), https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hisham-ibn-al-Kalbi.

Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, (via al-Kalbī), and al-Iṣfahānī. Other early *maqātil* are those of al-Juʿfī, ʿAmmār ibn Muʿāwiya ad-Duhnī (d. c. 751), and Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (d. 871).

Important sources for reconstructing early *maqātil* include Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. 892), Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad ibn Dāwūd Dīnawarī (d. 896), Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī (d. 956), Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 967), and al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 1022).[391] The works of this first generation are largely lost to time, but were important for compilers in later generations.

Second Generation: Abū Mikhnaf

By far the most important early available source, one directly or indirectly used as material for most authors who followed, is Abū Mikhnaf.[392] Abū Mikhnaf's *Kitāb Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* is unmatched in importance: later *maqtal* writers heavily cite it and it is the namesake for a popular but misattributed contemporary version published in Kuwait, Qum, Najaf, Tehran, and Beirut.[393] Because of its importance in standing between the Umayyad era accounts and those of the middle Abbasid era, I consider this work by itself to be the second "generation" of Abbasid-era *maqātil*. Abū Mikhnaf's original has been lost, but it was preserved by Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821). Abū Mikhnaf, whose father was a companion of ʿAlī, enjoys the respect of Sunnīs and Shīʿīs alike and is often, with al-Ṭabarī, considered one of the two great early Muslim historians. Wüstenfeld, Sezgin, and Mavani have studied Abū Mikhnaf's corpus, though there remains to be done much scholarly analysis of Ḥusayn's function therein. Later *maqtal* writers are indebted to

[391] Howard, "Accounts," 3, 11f.

[392] Al-Ṭabarī's treatment of Ḥusayn relies heavily on the recension of Abū Mikhnaf provided by ibn Hishām ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204).

[393] A prolific historian, Abū Mikhnaf is one of al-Ṭabarī's primary sources for information about the early community.

Abū Mikhnaf's carefully compiled narrative. These include the 9th-10th century compilers, the third generation of *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* writers.

Third Generation: al-Ṭabarī and al-Iṣfahānī

The third "generation" consists of tenth century texts that draw on earlier *maqātil*. Ulrika Mårtensson has written prolifically about al-Ṭabarī. Among her contributions to Ṭabarī scholarship, and germane to the question of how far reaching *maqtal*-inspired devotion was in the Abbasid period, is her assertion that al-Ṭabarī was a "moderate Shīʿite," a political quietist and religious moderate sympathetic to the Zaydī movement in a milieu in which both "radical" Shīʿism and nascent Sunnism were crystalizing.[394] In my study, the possibility of being "pro-ʿAlid" without identifying with strict Shīʿism will be very important for understanding the *maqtal* of the likely Sunnī al-Khwārizmī. Pro-ʿAlid sympathies crossed emerging sectarian lines, so *maqtal* portrayals of the divine can have implications for Islam beyond Twelver Shīʿism. I will turn to this point in the chapter's excursus.

The nineteenth in al-Ṭabarī's forty-volume *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk* ("History of the Prophets and the Kings") treats the reign of Yazīd I; al-Ṭabarī devotes a significant portion of this volume to the people and events surrounding the battle of Karbalāʾ. These sections are much indebted to proto-Shīʿite *maqātil* from the first two Islamic centuries (especially Abū Mikhnaf). The same holds true for al-Iṣfahānī's *Maqātil al-Ṭālabiyyīn* ("Slayings of the Ṭālibīs"), which gives biographical details of some 236 "Ṭālibīs"—descendants of Muḥammad's uncle (ʿAlī's father) Abū Ṭālib—who lived during the first three Islamic centuries. Among them is Ḥusayn, to

[394] Ulrika Mårtensson, *The True New Testament: Sealing the Heart's Covenant in al-Tabarî's Taʾrîkh al-Rusul waʾl-Mulûk* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2001), 69.

whom al-Iṣfahānī dedicates 45 of the volume's roughly 700 pages. This third generation is particularly interesting for three reasons. First, its accounts fit Ḥusayn into a larger pattern of hagiography—a comparison between the ways that these texts treat Ḥusayn and their descriptions of less prominent martyrs might be informative. Second, it reflects two centuries of development of Ḥusayn's character and feats. Third, it shines light on how broadly Ḥusayn was received in the wider Muslim world. Both al-Ṭabarī and al-Iṣfahānī had significant connections to Sunnī Islam, and the former may have even self-identified as a Sunnī.[395] At the very least, neither was a Twelver Shīʿite, so to the extent that they contribute to this dissertation's conclusions they will represent a broadening of "Ḥusaynid" themes beyond the community that now most strongly identifies with them.

Antoine Borrut considers the genre of *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* to have peaked with al-Iṣfahānī and dismisses later accounts of Ḥusayn's passion as hagiography.[396] On the other hand, Sindawi writes that the late Abbasid texts are representative of the genre as a whole; to these we now turn.

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[395] Modern scholars are divided over the issue of al-Ṭabarī's sectarian identity. Mårtensson makes a compelling case that he was a "moderate Shīʿite" (an early Fiver, or Zaydī), locating him between the nascent "radical Shīʿite" (Twelver / Imāmī) community and the Sunnism of the ruling Abbasids. Other scholars believe that he was a Sunnī with ʿAlid sympathies. In tenth century Islam, sect was related to power. During al-Ṭabarī's lifetime Sevener / Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites formed the Fāṭimid dynasty in north Africa; within a decade of his death the Sunnī Ziyārid dynasty emerged in his home region of Ṭabaristan. The Twelver Shīʿite Būyids soon eclipsed the Ziyārids in most of Persia while the Abbasids yielded to the Fāṭimids in the Levant and the Ḥejāz. Central Arabia was ruled by Fiver Shīʿites from the mid-ninth century; Shīʿism was entering political ascendency for the first time. Yet at the time that he penned his extensive world history al-Ṭabarī was living in Sunnī-controlled Baghdad, having been trained in four schools of Sunnī jurisprudence and having been employed by several Sunnī officials. For his part, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (not to be confused with a number of Persian polymaths from Iṣfahān who share his demonym) was likely Shīʿite. Yet David Cook (2007) disputes this and contends that even if he was a Shīʿite he was a Fiver / Zaydī, not a Twelver / Imāmī. Furthermore, al-Iṣfahānī was a direct descendent of the Sunnī Umayyad caliph Marwān ibn Muḥammad. When al-Iṣfahānī wrote *Maqātil al-Ṭālabiyyīn* at the young age of 28, the Baghdad in which he and al-Ṭabarī were simultaneously living was the capital of the Sunnī Abbasid caliphate. Later *maqtal* writers were almost exclusively Twelver, a strand of Shīʿism that has been historically much more agonistic toward Sunnism than has been the Fiver strand. The high regard in which Sunnīs have historically held the pair (especially al-Ṭabarī, widely considered to be the Qurʾān commentator *par excellence*) means that they represent a bridge between the Shīʿa and Sunnī worlds. In this sense, high regard for Ḥusayn is more an ʿAlid than a Shīʿite phenomenon.

[396] Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ," 253.

Fourth Generation: Late Abbasid Texts

Following Sindawi, I have selected for this dissertation three extant complete volumes from the late-twelfth through mid-thirteenth century, which marked the end of Abbasid political ascendancy. These are al-Khwārizmī's *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī's *Muthīr al-Aḥzān*, and Ibn Ṭāwūs's *al-Luhūf fī Qatlā al-Ṭufūf*. In these three Ḥusayn's status is higher than it was in previous generations. Yet interestingly, it is also in a sense "lower"—that is, he suffers in an increased way. Ḥusayn's suffering and desperation increase in proportion to his quasi-divinity. He becomes something of a singularity, distinct in station even from his father ʿAlī, his grandfather Muḥammad, and his archetypal predecessor Jesus. acontemporary *maqātil* frequently cite these three texts. In a coming subsection I will treat them as a unit.

The late Abbasid texts draw on a number of the earlier works mentioned above, many lost to time or preserved only fragmentarily in subsequent *maqātil*.[397] These include the compilations of Abū Mikhnaf, al-Ṭabarī, al-Iṣfahānī, and Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī (d. 746), another Kūfan who was "a follower of the Imam al-Bāqir" and studied extensively under his direction (up to eighteen years according to one source).[398] Morteza Karimi's work, while not specifically germane to this project, is valuable for its conclusion that Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī's *Muthīr al-Aḥzān* qualifies as a *maqtal* text.[399]

The abovementioned four "generations" of *maqātil* are not the only ones; following the Abbasid age they have seen a resurgence at least twice. The Safavids resurrected the genre, as

[397] Cf. Howard, "Accounts," 1.

[398] Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ," 258, 266; Howard, "Arabic Accounts," 194. Howard (14) disputes the notion that al-Juʿfī was in fact a disciple of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq's father, Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 733) based on the dubiousness of the source that makes this claim.

[399] Morteza Karimi, "The Martyrdom of the Banu Hashim in Karbalāʾ as described by Ibn Namā' al-Ḥillī," 1

have modern scholars in the Shīʿa world. However, their bent toward hagiography so elevates Ḥusayn that he does not always function as a liminal figure. It is interesting to consider how liminality lingers in these "high Ḥusaynologies"—I will turn to this as an area for further study in the dissertation's conclusion.

Evolution of the Maqtal Genre

Inclusion of miracles

Scholars highlight the progression of Ḥusayn martyrologies from history to hagiography, and their sum total focuses on one major overarching trend. They notice that miracles are increasingly woven into the story, and therefore that Ḥusayn moves from being a person of history into a figure of devotion.[400] As we have seen above, we (as well as the early writers) have limited access to the historical Ḥusayn though extensive access to early memories of his sacrifice. Therefore, to say that the Ḥusayn of hagiography is radically different from the Ḥusayn of historiography is an oversimplification. This oversimplification is further compounded by this idea that miracles only come into play in later versions of the story. As the Ḥusaynologist Calmard notes, later "texts contain *many more* stories that are miraculous and supernatural than historical sources such as Ṭabari's *Tārik̲*."[401] There are a number of supernatural elements in very early stories, though they are multiplied extensively by the late Abbasid era.

I suggest that, in addition to the increasing proliferation of miracles, two significant trends mark the historical development of the *maqātil*. The later *maqātil* depict Ḥusayn as increasingly a direct victim of Yazīd and Shimr rather than their intermediaries, the Kūfan

[400] Cf. Ingvild Flaskerud, *Visualizing Belief and Piety in Iranian Shiism* (London: Contiuum, 2010), 146.
[401] Calmard, "Ḥorr-e Riahi," *emphasis added*.

governor Ibn Ziyād and his general Ibn Saʿd. This has the effect of hyperbolizing the slaying—Ḥusayn is at once a liminal hero snuffed out by Caesar's omnipotent strong-arming and a mere virtuous mortal slain on the battlefield by a depraved one. Second, the motif of vengeance shifts in perspective. This shift, like the increase in miracles, is not a black-and-white change, but it is increasingly the case that Ḥusayn is avenged not politically or temporally by guilt-stricken ʿAlids who terrorize the Umayyad establishment, but rather eschatologically and apocalyptically by a passionate deity whose ultimate justice is eternal. We will turn to these two shifts presently, but first it is important to note that miracles, while not emerging late *ex nihilo*, did become increasingly a means through which Ḥusayn's cosmic dimension was understood and conveyed.

Howard, one of the most prolific recent scholars of early Shīʿism, claims that the "earliest account of a miracle is reported by the Persian historian Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhūrī (d. 279 / 892), who reports that at Ḥusayn's death the sky rained blood."[402] Yet miracles associated with Karbalāʾ likely predate this. For example, as Antoine Borrut notes, "There was very early debate in the Umayyad court (c. 730) about a miracle in which a stone in Jerusalem began to bleed the night Ḥusayn was killed. The oldest preserved record of this event comes from Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (d. 328 / 940)."[403] Whether this miracle of terrestrial blood predates Balādhūrī's report of supernatural blood is a matter of debate, but it does seem that the fantastical was woven into battle accounts relatively early.

Abū Mikhnaf, the *maqtal* writer *par excellence* prior to giants like al-Ṭabarī, al-Iṣfahānī, and Ibn al-Kalbī, includes supernatural (or at least "trans-natural") traditions in his book. Some are gruesome but not fantastical, hinting at divine intervention without claiming miraculousness

[402] Howard, "Accounts,"30.
[403] Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ," 267.

outright. For example, when ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Ḥawza attempted to purchase the would-be martyr's intercession, "Ḥusayn made a supplication to God, 'O Lord, plunge him into the fire.' Upon this, his horse got restless and caused him to fall with his legs hanging onto the stirrup. His head was dragged on the ground, striking every stone and tree until he died."[404] Other such events involve dreams or visions but no alteration of the fabric of the physical universe: "He woke up, startled and related a dream he had just had of the Prophet, who had told him, 'O Ḥusayn my beloved, you shall be coming to us soon.'" Following that,

> [Zaynab] approached her brother and said, "My brother, do you not hear the sound of the army coming toward us?" Ḥusayn raised his head and said, 'I just saw the Messenger of God…in a vision. He said to me, "You are marching towards us." His sister slapped her face and cried out, "Woe to me." Ḥusayn told her, "Woe is not for you."[405]

Abū Mikhnaf also straddles a line between miracle and metaphor that later accounts often ignored. For example, he reports that a letter from 'Abdallāh ibn Jaʿfar ibn Abī Ṭālib told Ḥusayn: "If you were to be killed today, the light of earth would extinguish."[406] Light literally extinguishes in later accounts, but in this earlier one the luminosity is ambiguous if not outright metaphorical.

One of the most poignant miracles associated with Karbalāʾ involves the murder of Ḥusayn's infant son. Later accounts evocatively lament the infant's brutal slaughter followed by any one of several miracles involving his blood interacting with the heavens; Abū Mikhnaf reports nothing of the tears and miracles associated with the baby's death. Sibṭ ibn Jawzī does report that 'Abdallāh was crying from thirst, though he says that the infant was killed by a spear

[404] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 142.

[405] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 111 (here Ayoub cites al-Ṭabarī, likely referring back to Abū Mikhnaf); Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 116.

[406] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 75.

instead of an arrow, suggesting a morphing and mythologizing of the story over the course of centuries.[407]

Still, Abū Mikhnaf's account is not devoid of the miraculous. Before Ḥusayn's departure toward Kūfa and Karbalāʾ, Muslim Ibn ʿAqīl prefigures the blood and thirst that would encapsulate Ḥusayn's withered humanity:

> He poured water into the cup and offered Muslim to drink it. Whenever he tried to drink from it, the water turned into blood. On his third attempt to drink water, two of his teeth dropped into the cup and he said, "Praise belongs to God. If this water had been earmarked for me, I would have drunk it."[408]

Abū Mikhnaf does not shy away from traditions just because they violate the way the world typically operates, a challenge to scholars who draw a stark divide between Ḥusaynid histories (culminating in al-Ṭabarī and al-Iṣfahānī) and hagiographies (including late Abbasid, Safavid, and modern Iranian *maqātil*). Still, it is worth noting their point: during the course of the Abbasid age, Ḥusayn became much larger than life and came to rival his mother, father, and grandfather in terms of cosmic significance. The *maqtal* reporter al-Yaʿqūbī (d. ca. 897) paraphrases Abū Mikhnaf but then adds a miraculous conclusion:

> The Prophet had given Umm Salama some soil which he had received from the angel Gabriel. This would turn red when the Imam al-Ḥusayn was killed. When that happened, Umm Salama tearfully announced the death of the Imam in Medina, at the time that it had happened at Karbalāʾ.[409]

Miracles associated with Ḥusayn inflated during the Abbasid age, and would—by Safavid times—eclipse his human foibles. At the end of the Abbasid era his humanity remained

[407] Ibid, 164.
[408] Ibid, 60f.
[409] Howard, "Accounts," 32.

the bedrock for his suffering while his quasi-divinity was gradually becoming entrenched. The development of Ḥusayn's otherworldly properties exposed a liminal moment in which the two poles seemed to bleed into one another and from which Twelvers have derived a cosmic link in a broken world. The changing statuses of Ḥusayn's killers and the turn toward apocalyptic reversal similarly place the "Ḥusayn event" at the nexus between the human and the divine.

Toward a "High Ḥusaynology"

Early narratives are keen to identify the historical killers of Ḥusayn (whose ultimate executioner can vary between any number of combinations of Shimr, Zarʿa ibn Shāriq, Ḥāsin, Sinān ibn Anas, Ṣāliḥ ibn Wahhāb, and another unnamed soldier possibly being responsible for dealing the mortal blow or shot).[410] Yet as the genre developed (and Yazīd's Umayyad caliphate fell by the wayside), the story increasingly retracted its blame of the middlemen, specifically the Kūfan governor Ibn Ziyād—who was threatened with displacement should he fail the caliph's orders—and his military *chargé d'affaires* Ibn Saʿd. Instead, *maqtal* writers placed responsibility squarely at the bookends of command, specifically the minor officer Shimr (and his foot soldiers) and the caliph Yazīd I.[411] Similarly, Ḥusayn's decision regarding the options of death or humility shifts as the Imam takes on the cloak of divine agent: at first, he is willing to bargain for

[410] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 170.

[411] Compare Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Aḥzān*, 34 ("'Who will kill (*yaqtulu*) him?' He said: 'A man called Yazīd…'") with Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 75 ("Shimr has killed (*qatala*) al-Ḥusayn"). Both of these men are often named as Ḥusayn's primary killer, with the intermediaries ʿUbayd Allāh Ibn Ziyād and ʿUmar Ibn Saʿd, while not exonerated in the same way as the repentant al-Ḥurr Ibn Yazīd al-Tamīmī, are largely spared blame for the capital offense.

his life, but centuries later his hagiographers portray him as a Christic figure, knowing that his unjust killing is coming but unwilling to sacrifice scruples on the altar of pragmatism.[412]

Rise of Liturgical Commemoration

Maqātil are not the only form in which Twelver Shīʿites commemorate Ḥusayn's martyrdom. Arguably the most punctuated time of year in the global Shīʿa community is the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram, culminating in the day of ʿAshurāʾ. These are days of intense mourning and reflection on the sacrifice of the Prophet's grandson for the sake of justice and the community of the faithful. Devotees compose and memorize odes and elegies, and perform elaborate reenactments of the Karbalāʾ event called *taʿziyeh* (Persian) or *taʿziya* (Arabic) plays. These often draw on *maqtal* sources. Oftentimes the only actor who holds a script in these plays is the one playing Ḥusayn, so that it is clear to the mourning audience that he is not trying to take Ḥusayn's place. From Indonesia to Lebanon, from Myanmar even to Jamaica, Ḥusayn is commemorated through street processions featuring banners called *ʿalams* and funeral biers called *tabuik*s; these public spectacles oftentimes include men and women scourging themselves with whips and chains or cutting their scalps with blades in an effort to mingle their blood with their slain Imam's; others pound on drums, beat their chests, or even walk barefoot across coals. Elaborate buildings called *Ḥusayniyya*s are erected to house devotional commemoration and the recitation of poetry. The Red Crescent Society holds blood drives that are well-attended, and

[412] Compare Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 117 with later responses to diplomatic offers. In addition to being Christic, Ḥusayn is for these authors saintly. This late Abbasid Ḥusayn falls well within the bounds of the concept of "sainthood" as articulated by Sindawi: saints typically have seven virtues – (1) noble origin, (2) miraculous/prophesied birth, (3) childly traits of charity, morality, courage, heroism, and wisdom, (4) exceptional events [including resurrection], (5) self-sacrifice, (6) relics, and (7) miracle working both before and after death.[412] Each of the seven is found repeatedly in late Abbasid accounts of Ḥusayn's birth, life, passion, death, and eternal resonance.

pilgrims travel to Karbalāʾ and other holy sites. While it is beyond the purview of this dissertation to examine these practices—scholars such as David Pinault, Peter Chelkowksi, and Jean Calmard have done so—the centrality of Karbalāʾ in Shīʿa religious practice stands as a testament to the continued living importance of this narrative within the Shīʿa identity and worldview.[413]

Choice of Texts

Late Abbasid Authors' Backgrounds

The three texts selected—those of al-Khwārizmī, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, and Ibn Ṭāwūs—focus on Ḥusayn's passion at the Battle of Karbalāʾ. These works are significant because they emerged at a liminal moment in the historiography of the slain Imam: they depict Ḥusayn as simultaneously grandiose and subject to external whims. These three *maqātil* function together as a useful interlocutor for conversation with Moltmannian Christianity on the topic of divine passibility. This section provides background for situating the three texts at hand.

Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī was born in 1169 in Ḥilla, not far from Kūfa and Karbalāʾ. He came from a pro-ʿAlid family, and his *Muthīr al-Aḥzān* reflects his partisanship. It revolves around four major episodes: Ḥusayn's life from birth until his exodus, the events which led up to Karbalāʾ, the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ, and the aftermath.[414] His *maqtal* especially represents a divergence from earlier *maqātil* in the order in which the Ḥusaynids die in the battle: Abū

[413] David Pinault, "Shia Lamentation Rituals and Reinterpretations of the Doctrine of Intercession: Two Cases from Modern India," in *History of Religions*, vol. 38 no. 3 (1999); Peter Chelkowksi, "From Maqātil Literature to Drama," in *Papers from the Imam Ḥusayn Conference*, London, July 1984; Chelkowski, *Taʿziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York: NYU Press, 1979); Calmard, "Ḥorr-e Riahi."

[414] Morteza Karimi, "The Martyrdom of the Banu Hashim in Karbalāʾ as described by Ibn Namā' al-Ḥillī," 2.

Mikhnaf simply repeats traditions he has heard, but for Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, what matters more is that the order of deaths represent the order of divine proximity: for the latter and not the former, the brothers of ʿAbbās died before ʿAlī al-Akbar.[415] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī is a prominent example of the late Abbasid Twelver *maqātil*, though Ibn Ṭāwūs and even the likely Sunnī al-Khwārizmī receive much more attention in contemporary reconstructions of the battle.

For his part, Ibn Ṭāwūs is not often discussed in scholarly treatments of Ḥusayn. Still, his was a significant voice among the developing late Abbasid Shīʿites.[416] A descendant of Ḥasan through his father and Ḥusayn through his mother, Ibn Ṭāwūs was part of a Shīʿite family that included prominent jurists and theologians. Typically known as al-Sayyid ibn Ṭāwūs, he studied under Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, among others. Leaning more toward theology than jurisprudence, Ibn Ṭāwūs composed his *maqtal* as a devotional aid for pilgrims traveling to Karbalāʾ.

Al-Khwārizmī (known as either Ahkṭab al-Khwārizmī, al-Muwaffaq al-Khwārizmī, or simply al-Balkhī) died at the end of the Abbasid political era.[417] Though not the latest of our three late Abbasid era texts, his is the most comprehensive. Scholars consider al-Khwārizmī to have been a Sunnī.[418] Despite his likely sectarian identity, his reverence for Ḥusayn and support for the anti-Umayyad rebels are clear. Al-Khwārizmī's *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, composed in thirteenth century Persia (by then a Twelver stronghold), draws heavily on earlier pro-ʿAlid *maqātil* and, as will be seen in the coming chapters, does not differ significantly from the martyrologies of his contemporary Twelvers in either detail or editorial voice. If he was in fact a Sunnī, this could point to a lingering pro-ʿAlid sentiment even as late as the close of the Abbasid

[415] Morteza Karimi, "Martyrdom," 3.

[416] For a sustained analysis of the extant parts of his library, see Ethan Kohlberg's *A Medieval Muslim Scholar at Work : Ibn Tawus and His Library* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

[417] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* ch.1 n. 14, 260.

[418] Cf. ibid, 21.

age and a differentiation between the pietistic and political dimensions of the "Sunnī-Shīʿī divide" even at this late a period.

Engaging the sheer quantity of *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* is a formidable task, but in each era, there are a few that encapsulate the renditions of their contemporaries. In addition to the three earlier sources described above (Abū Mikhnaf, al-Ṭabarī, al-Iṣfahānī) and the three late Abbasid accounts of interest here (Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, Ibn Ṭāwūs, and al-Khwārizmī), detailed accounts have also been preserved by al-Balādhurī (d. 892) and al-Dīnawārī (d. between 894 and 903).[419] Against Borrut's objection that the end of the tenth century "marks the end of the *Maqātil Literature"* as a discrete literary genre, one can find in the late twelfth century another step in the progression thereof from tenth century history to Safavid-era hagiography. It is to the three late Abbasid era scholars—Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, Ibn Ṭāwūs, and al-Khwārizmī—that we turn in the coming chapters, looking first to a common literary motif that they share: the use of liquids to highlight Ḥusayn's humanity.

Contemporary Scholarship

This study will draw on a number of secondary sources in the course of the analysis of the primary. I do not read the texts in isolation; as Wittgenstein and Rawls reminded us earlier, language is never private. Many scholars in the last century and a half have focused, sometimes tangentially, on Ḥusayn and those who commemorated him in Islamic collective memory. Modern scholarship on the study of *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* can be divided roughly into three groups. The first group focuses on Ḥusayn and early ʿAlidism (devotion to ʿAlī and his household)

[419] Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ," 255 n.31.

without focusing on *maqātil* (martyrologies, literally "slayings") in particular; there are many other sources of information about these subjects such as literature, poetry, elegies, stories, odes, plays, *hadith* reports, and even astrological histories.[420] I focus on the *maqātil* because of their narrative nature, though they inform and are informed by many of these other types of source. Contemporary scholars who study Ḥusayn, the ʿAlids, and early Shīʿism mention the *maqtal* literature. These include the late Ayatollah Muḥammad Mahdī Shamsaddīn (1936-2001), a prominent Shīʿī scholar who actively promoted Christian-Shīʿa coexistence in his native Lebanon. He wrote in great detail about Imam Ḥusayn, and his book *Supporters of Ḥusayn* (*Anṣār al-Ḥusayn*, translated recently into English) specifically deals with hagiographical accounts of Ḥusayn's passion.[421] The most prominent English language representative of Ḥusayn scholars in the last generation has been the Lebanese-born interfaith academic Mahmoud Ayoub. One of the first Western texts to draw attention to the parallels between the passions of Ḥusayn and Jesus, Ayoub's 1978 *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* demonstrates the salvific nature that the death and memory of Ḥusayn have for the Twelver Shīʿite community. Ayoub notes that the concepts of redemption, intercession, and salvation are not perfectly analogous in Christian and Twelver theologies, but despite this his contribution to interreligious dialogue through focus on Ḥusayn's passion is valuable.[422] He also more recently has weighed in on the scholarly debate about the origins of the original ʿĀshūrāʾ commemoration, and in taking the position that it is directly related to the Yom Kippur fast, might further Muslim-Jewish dialogue as well.[423] I will

[420] Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ," 253f.

[421] Shamsaddīn, Muḥammad Mahdī, *Anṣār al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-Dawliyya li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 1996); cf. I.K.A. Howard, *Arabic Accounts of Al-Ḥusayn's Martyrdom*, Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace, 2014, 192.

[422] Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* 18f.

[423] Ayoub, "ʿĀšūrāʾ," in in *Encyclopædia Iranica Vol. II, Fasc. 8*, (New York: The Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 2004), 874-876.

be in discussion with and build upon Ayoub's scholarship. His focus on redemptive suffering has implications for, but is distinct from, my interest in divine passibility.

The second group is interested in historical figures whose *œuvre*s included *maqātil*, but these contemporary scholars do not focus primarily on the martyrologies. A number of Western-language academics have expertise on specific *maqtal* writers. The Russian scholar C. M. Прозоров (S.M. Prosorov) described two early commentators in his 1980 Арабская Историческая Литература: В Ираке, Иране И Средней Азии (*Arabic Historical Literature: Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia*): Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī and Abū Mikhnaf.[424] This text is mostly a biographical dictionary that remains one of the earliest serious non-Muslim treatments of these early Ḥusayn biographers. It contains only brief entries on more than one hundred early ʿAlids, and does not separate Abū Mikhnaf from the rest of the subjects in terms of either profundity or importance. A number of other scholars have focused on *maqtal* writers. Hamid Mavani has translated Abū Mikhnaf's *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* into English in his work as a scholar of Shīʿite politics and jurisprudence. Sebastian Günther has studied *maqātil* in general and noted that the most voluminous and significant subgenre is *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*. Ursula Sezgin (Abū Mikhnaf), Ethan Kohlberg (Ibn Ṭāwūs), Ulrika Mårtensson (al-Ṭabarī), and Sebastian Günther (al-Iṣfahānī) have published meticulous books about *maqtal* writers, though their four works focus more on the genre as a whole rather than giving special sustained attention to Ḥusayn's martyrdom.

The third group consists of a handful of scholars who have written specifically about *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* in the last century and a half. This group includes Wüstenfeld, who translated Abū Mikhnaf's *Maqtal* into German in 1882 or 1883 as *Der Tod des Ḥusein ben ʿAlî und die*

[424] С. М. Прозоров, *Арабская Историческая Литература: В Ираке, Иране И Средней Азии* (Moscow: Славная Редакция Восточной Литературы / Slavnaya Redaktsiya Vostochnoy Literature, 1980), 10-23, 29-37, 46-48, 51-55.

Rache and prefaced it with a thorough introduction listing three of Abū Mikhnaf's extant works, including *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*.[425] Günther has written a very helpful article on the *maqtal* genre as a whole, as has Khalid Sindawi.[426] Finally, Ayoub, Shamsaddīn, and I.K.A. Howard each have engaged in sustained reflection on early accounts of Ḥusayn's martyrdom.

With the exception of Sindawi, contemporary surveys of *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* have rarely focused on the late Abbasid material as entry points into the study of the genre. There are several "moments" in its development, so why focus on this one? Those few scholars who have written on the subject have offered analyses of the works of earlier authors and compilers: Abū Mikhnaf (Wüstenfeld, Sezgin), al-Ṭabarī (Mårtensson, Howard), and al-Iṣfahānī (Günther).[427]

There are other scholars who deal not just with *maqtal* writers, but with their *maqātil* specifically. Khalid Sindawi undertook an interesting study of the late Abbasid *maqātil*, describing the works of Ibn Ṭāwūs, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, and al-Khwārizmī as "characteristic" of the genre along with Abū Mikhnaf's *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*.[428] The first Westerner to study the genre was Wüstenfeld in the aforementioned 1883 *Der Tod des Ḥusein ben ʿAlí und die Rache: Ein historischer Roman aus dem Arabischen*, which is an introduction to and translation of *al-Luhūf fī Qatlā at-Tufūf* by Ibn Ṭāwūs. Etan Kohlberg has produced a meticulous anthology of Ibn Ṭāwūs's library but does not analyze his *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* in detail. As noted above, Borrut writes that there was no significant development of the genre between the 10th century and the rise of the Safavid Empire (early 16th century).[429] Yet there is a compelling reason to consider the

[425] Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, *Der Tod des Ḥusein ben ʿAlî und die Rache* (unknown, 1882);
[426] Günther, "Maqâtil Literature;" Khalid Sindawi, "The Image of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī in Maqātil Literature" in *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 20-21 (2002-3).
[427] Al-Iṣfahānī is sometimes rendered al-Iṣbahānī.
[428] Khalid Sindawi, "Image," 79.
[429] Borrut, "Remembering Karbalāʾ," 252f.

earliest *maqātil* written by Twelvers and their sympathizers. These *maqātil* depict Ḥusayn as a liminal figure, and in doing so open up space, when read narratively and "from below," for Twelver Shīʿism to converse with Moltmannian thought on the subject of passibility.

Excursus: *Maqtal* Writers Challenging the Sunnī-Shīʿī Divide

This dissertation, while focusing specifically on late Abbasid *maqātil*, has implications for Islam more broadly. Support for ʿAlī's household was widespread in the Abbasid era, during which Shīʿism began to crystalize. This excursus addresses the status of the *maqātil* in the late Abbasid period, showing that they were important to Muslims beyond only the Shīʿa/Twelvers. Not all admirers of Ḥusayn can be classified as Twelver Shīʿites; Ḥusayn also has been considered an important figure by Islamic scholars who are not easily classified in terms of sect. Ḥusayn's importance for such scholars is demonstrated in the writing of three foundational Abbasid scholars. Ḥusayn's broader importance—and that of the *maqātil*—demonstrates that the implications of this project are significant beyond the bounds of Twelver thought. The late Abbasid period was a time in which not just Twelvers but other Muslims displayed reverence for Ḥusayn. Considering Sunnī analogues in significant detail is beyond our purview, but it is important to note that devotees to the household of the Prophet and ʿAlī were not purely Twelver Shīʿites. The considerable on-the-ground fluidity between nascent sects seems to have lasted several centuries; this can be seen in the case three scholars who wrote about Ḥusayn: Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), as well as those of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 967) and al-Muwaffaq al-Khwārizmī (d. 1172). I begin with the sectarian identity of one of Islam's greatest scholars, al-Ṭabarī. Though he is often labeled either a Sunnī or a Shīʿī, his theological

outlook defies this reduction. Al-Ṭabarī's attention to Ḥusayn is evidence that the conclusions of this dissertation speak to Islam writ large.

There is a tendency among some contemporary scholars to label Umayyad- and Abbasid-era figures as either Sunnī or Shīʿī. Especially recognizable figures like Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (838-923) and ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (897-967) are vulnerable to this labeling. Yet the formation of what we now think of Shīʿism and the coalescing of what we now think of as "orthodox" Sunnism took centuries and from the beginning were marked by people who took middle paths. Al-Ṭabarī and al-Iṣfahānī, whose writings include two of the most important extant early accounts of Ḥusayn's death, seem to be among those moderates who cannot be classified easily as "Sunnī" or "Shīʿī" in the polarized sense in which the terms are understood currently. This is not universally affirmed, however. Scholarship has a long history of conflating "Shīʿism" with its Twelver strand. For example, the canon of contemporary English-language introductions to Shīʿism gives limited attention to non-Twelver forms of Shīʿism (notably the Zaydīs, the Ismāʿīlīs, and the so-called *ghulāt*, or "extremist" sects).[430] Even Najam Haider's *Shīʿism: An Introduction*, which devotes an equal number of chapters to the history and contemporary situation of the Zaydīs, (Nizārī) Ismāʿīlīs, and Twelvers, ends with a conclusion that falls into the trap of this conflation. While demographic data is notoriously unreliable, available statistics suggest that even today, when "political" Shīʿism is represented in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Tajikistan, and Bahrain by Twelverism, there are about as many people in other Shīʿite groups or offshoots of historical Shīʿism as there are who adhere to the Twelver creed.[431] This

[430] See especially Moojan Momen's 1987 *An Introduction to Shiʿi Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shiʿism*, Hamid Dabashi's 2012 *Shiʿism: A Religion of Protest*, and Najam Haider's 2014 *Shīʿism: An Introduction.*

[431] Cf. Tasi Perkins, "Sunni-Shiʿi Ecumenism as a Challenge to the Legitimacy of 'Fringe' Shiʿite Movements," at the Religion, Conflict, and Boundary Maintenance conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, 2015.

matters to our study because implicit in the question of whether or not people such as al-Ṭabarī and al-Iṣfahānī were Shīʿas is often determined by analyzing how well they fit into Twelver categories. Ibn Ṭāwūs, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, and—to an extent—al-Khwārizmī do, but they compiled their *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* material centuries after al-Ṭabarī and al-Iṣfahānī.

Al-Ṭabarī is a monumental figure in Islamic thought, and his identity is often contested. Precisely because of the ambiguity of this identity, he serves as an entry point to the larger sphere of Islamic thought. There is a long history of associating al-Ṭabarī with Shīʿism, even its more "extreme" Imāmī/Twelver incarnations. This tradition dates back to al-Ṭabarī himself, who endured accusations of radical Shīʿism leveled by his Ḥanbalite adversaries in Baghdad. The Ḥanbalites were correct that al-Ṭabarī held a number of pro-Shīʿa positions on issues ranging from ablution to *ijtihād*, or independent juristic reasoning.[432] Still, it seems clear that the Ḥanbalites were more offended by al-Ṭabarī's dismissal of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal as a "mere" *ḥadīth* collector than they were by any genuinely Shīʿite tendencies in al-Ṭabarī's intellectual output.[433] This has led many scholars to conclude that al-Ṭabarī's connection to Shīʿism is purely conjectured, that he is best classified, in the words of C.E. Bosworth, as "basically within the framework of 'orthodox' Islam as conceived, e.g. in the environment of Ibn Ḥanbal just before al-Ṭabarī's time and that of al-Ashʿarī after him."[434] Still, Bosworth's account is slightly reductionist. He notes that early ninth century Ṭabaristan "had not [become] so closely identified

[432] Christopher Melchert, "The Imamis between Rationalism and Traditionalism" in Linda Clarke, *ed*. Shīʿite Heritage: Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions (Binghamton, NY: Global Publications, 2001), 279.

[433] Mårtensson, *True New Testament*, 59f.

[434] C.E. Bosworth, "al-Ṭabarī" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-tabari-COM_1133?s.num=1&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=al-%E1%B9%ACabar%C4%AB; cf. Dominique Sourdel, "Une Profession de Foi de l'Historien al-Ṭabarī," in *Revue des Études Islamiques*, 36 (1968), 177ff.

with Zaydī Shīʿism as it was later to become." Presumably this is a reference to the 914 conquest of Ṭabaristan by the Zaydī missionary al-Nāṣir li'l-Ḥaqq after fourteen years of Samanid rule. But Bosworth's estimation neglects two elements of al-Ṭabarī's milieu. First, Ṭabaristan had been under the rule of the Zaydid dynasty from al-Ṭabarī's 25th to his 64th birthdays, its capital even located in his hometown of Āmol. Second, al-Ṭabarī's greatest intellectual output emerged not from Ṭabaristan but from Baghdad, which by the early tenth century was as close to a religiously pluralistic environment as any in the pre-modern age.[435] Twelve years after his death Baghdad became the capital of the nascent Buyid dynasty whose Zaydī Shīʿite creed eventually shifted to Twelverism.

Not all scholars join Bosworth in labeling al-Ṭabarī either "Sunnī," "proto-Sunnī," or "orthodox." Taking on Bosworth's position is al-Ṭabarī scholar Ulrika Mårtensson. As noted above, she is convincing in asserting that al-Ṭabarī was a "moderate Shīʿite," locating him between the nascent "radical Shīʿite" community and the Sunnism of the ruling Abbasids.[436] Shīʿism was on the move at the turn of the tenth century; during al-Ṭabarī's lifetime, Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites formed the Fāṭimid dynasty in North Africa. Central Arabia was ruled by Zaydī Shīʿites from the mid-ninth century, as were Persia and Iraq from the early tenth. Shīʿism was entering political ascendency for the first time. Some will object that at the time that he penned his extensive world history al-Ṭabarī was living in Sunnī- (or proto-Sunnī-) controlled Baghdad. Still, al-Ṭabarī was independently wealthy and largely spurned the patronage system.[437] He therefore was not beholden to rulers and official state doctrines. Rather, he seems to have charted

[435] Sidney Griffith, http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/en/e/ieiw/studying/teaching_staff_1415/griffith_sidney/index.html
[436] Ulrika Mårtensson, *True New Testament*, 69.
[437]Bosworth.

his own path and to have been a student of the diversity within Islam rather than an apologist for particular Muslim governors. Having been trained in four schools of Sunnī jurisprudence, he eventually established his own Jarīrī *madhhab*. There are good reasons for classifying al-Ṭabarī as Sunnī (Bosworth) or Shīʿī (Mårtensson), but the real answer probably lies somewhere in the middle. The Ḥanbalī accusation of *rafḍ*, extreme Shīʿism, need not hold water for one to claim that al-Ṭabarī had some Zaydī Shīʿī inclinations.

Attempts to identify al-Ṭabarī's sectarian identity tend to center on his *tafsīr*, or Qurʾānic commentary, rather than on his tome on world history called "Treatise on the History of the Prophets and the Kings [and the Caliphs]." Looking to his Qurʾānic commentary rather than his world history makes sense, since while he often tips his hand regarding his preferred interpretation of a given *āya* (Qurʾānic verse), he is less likely to adjudicate between different accounts of a given historical episode. Yet it is possible to discern something of al-Ṭabarī's commitments in his presentation of historical narratives. He drew from myriad sources, and it appears that he frequently selected the single account that he found most plausible for any given historical event. This is especially apparent in his treatment of Ḥusayn. His primary source for the story of Ḥusayn's martyrdom is the eighth century scholar Abū Mikhnaf as preserved by Ibn Hishām ibn al-Kalbī, but al-Ṭabarī omits large portions of Abū Mikhnaf's account and supplements what remains with a variety of sources. While many of these other sources are lost to time, there are moments in which they describe the same events, as Abū Mikhnaf does, but using different details and derived from different convictions. By *not* including variant traditions in his *History* al-Ṭabarī may in fact be making similar editorial comments as he does *by* including variants in his *tafsīr*. A few clues in al-Ṭabarī's treatment of the Ḥusayn saga, therefore, might shed light on his theological affinity for the partisans of ʿAlī and Ḥusayn.

The sheer amount of ink that al-Ṭabarī spills vindicating Ḥusayn's claim is already evidence that he found the Karbalāʾ drama compelling. It is intriguing that a man pressed for space would devote so many pages to yet another failed revolt against an established caliphate. By contrast, he devotes much less space to the subsequent rebellion of ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr, even though the latter was much more effective. [438]

Two accounts in al-Ṭabarī's treatment of Ḥusayn's death suggest a theological affinity for Batrī Shīʿism, a largely defunct incarnation of Zaydism to which we will return and which approached proto-Sunnism in its attitudes toward the first three caliphs, the transmission of knowledge, and traditional Shīʿa theological stances. Though it reads like an impartial recording of available historical materials, al-Ṭabarī's presentation of Ḥusayn's passion shows a tendency toward this Shīʿite perspective. This in turn challenges the all-too-prevalent assumption that sectarian polarization was complete by al-Ṭabarī's time. We can see this proto-Sunnī, pro-ʿAlid Shīʿite impulse in al-Ṭabarī's recounting of the slaying of Ḥusayn.

Al-Ṭabarī reconstructs the Karbalāʾ story by drawing on several *maqtal* texts from the early Abbasid era. At two moments in this retelling he seems to suggest a theological stance best described as Batrī Zaydī Shīʿism. As the earliest manifestation of Zaydism, the Batrī movement was characterized by a reluctance to condemn completely the early Muslim community that had selected Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān prior to the eventual recognition of ʿAlī as the rightful head of the *umma*. Unlike later Imāmī Shīʿa communities, the Batrīs held two positions on ʿAlī which straddle the divide between what came to be known as Sunnism and Shīʿism. Over and against the Kharijites they affirmed ʿAlī's decision to accept arbitration following the battle of

[438] By my count, I.KA. Howard's translation of al-Ṭabarī's *History of the Prophets and Kings* devotes 166 pages to Husayn's struggle but only 41 to Zubayr's. Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*.

Ṣiffīn. Over and against the Imāmī Shīʿites, however, they understood that while supporting rivals against ʿAlī was to be condemned, such support would not render one an apostate; many Batrīs went so far as to hold that those who opposed and attacked ʿAlī later repented. These two incidents, with Batrī conclusions, are recapitulated in al-Ṭabarī's treatment of Ḥusayn's death.

First, during ʿAlī's caliphate, the Umayyad usurper Muʿāwiya launched a rebellion. ʿAlī's forces were winning the battle when Muʿāwiya sued for peace. Rather than continue the battle and exterminate his foes, ʿAlī agreed to arbitration and wound up allowing Muʿāwiya to retreat westward where he would raise a new army. A faction within ʿAlī's ranks, who came to be known as the Kharijites, considered this problematic. According to their thinking, God decides who wins on the battlefield, whereas humans decide the outcome of diplomacy. Indignant at this defiance of God's decision-making, the Kharijites eventually murdered ʿAlī, after which Muʿāwiya assumed leadership of the Muslim community. Diplomacy was, for the Kharijites, tantamount to apostasy. While al-Ṭabarī seems to agree theologically that God controls the outcome of battles, he nevertheless does not fault Ḥusayn for seeking a peaceful resolution in his own conflict.[439]

Al-Ṭabarī's Ḥusayn was both an arbitrator and a diplomat. As the son of ʿAlī prepared to confront the son of Muʿāwiya, Ḥusayn sacrificed principle on the altar of peace by seeking a diplomatic resolution. ʿAlī bore this accusation both after the battle of Ṣiffīn and when he chose not to prosecute those involved in ʿUthmān's assassination. Later Twelver Shīʿite *maqtal* accounts would be careful to shield Ḥusayn from a similar accusation. His attitude toward fighting Yazīd's forces has undergone two shifts over the course of the genre's development. Recently, especially in its connection to the Iranian Revolution, ʿĀshūrāʾ commentators have

[439] "The Events of the Year 61," in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 5.

claimed that Ḥusayn was a virtuous revolutionary whose only aim was to topple Yazīd's unjust government. This replaces the earlier Twelver explanation, developed toward the end of the Abbasid age, that Ḥusayn foreknew his martyrdom and functioned as a lamb voluntarily marching to its slaughter. Al-Ṭabarī's account has neither of these "extreme" Shīʿī elements. Rather, for him Ḥusayn is a politically expedient adversary willing to give up his authority in exchange for safety. His aids plead with Yazīd's generals for clemency with lines like "Do not prevent this man from going to his cousin, Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya. By my life! Yazīd will be satisfied with your obedience without killing al-Ḥusayn."[440] For his part, Ḥusayn offers a series of nonviolent solutions, all of which would result in Yazīd retaining the caliphate, and Ḥusayn, like his older brother Ḥasan, forfeiting his legitimate claim to leadership of the caliphate. When the support of the Kūfans wanes, Ḥusayn says, "The people of this town of yours wrote to me that I should come. However, if they have now come to dislike me, then I will leave them."[441] He sends three proposals to Yazīd: either he can return to his home, or he can self-exile to the frontiers of the Islamic world where he "will be treated like any other Muslim with the same rights and obligations," or he can travel to Damascus, put his hand in Yazīd's, offer the oath of allegiance, and negotiate a resolution to their differences. Though al-Ṭabarī's *History* is generally marked by conciseness and a lack of redundancy, he repeats the details of this offer several times as if to highlight it.[442] Here al-Ṭabarī includes the only set of conflicting reports in the entire Ḥusayn story: after presenting the three peaceful options, he then cites another source who claims, "By God! He neither gave the promise, which the people claim to recall when they allege that he would put his hand in the hand of Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya or that they should send

[440] Ibid, 126.
[441] Ibid, 106.
[442] Ibid, 2f., 5, 17, 190.

him to any one of the Muslims' border stations."[443] Immediately, however, al-Ṭabarī cites another source which agrees with his first one, claiming that Ḥusayn did indeed seek peace even at the cost of arbitration and deference. If al-Ṭabarī's *tafsīr* (Qurʾānic interpretation) is any indication of how he deals with competing narratives—ordering them in such a way as to highlight his preferences—it is clear here not only that he affirms the story of arbitration but also that he is going out of his way to challenge the narrative of Ḥusayn's obstinate refusal to make peace.

The Batrī position is seen here too in Ḥusayn's lack of cosmological recourse. He begs for his life, but he directs his request to the enemy rather than to God. In fact, there is just one mention of God's involvement in the fighting in al-Ṭabarī's entire account. Just before the battle the Prophet comes to Ḥusayn in a dream forecasting the latter's death. Apart from this vision, al-Ṭabarī's retelling is lacking the degree of divine intervention that saturates the Twelver late Abbasid *maqtal* texts. Al-Ṭabarī's version fits the Batrī paradigm in which succession disputes are political rather than supernatural.

At the same time, in his reluctance to sacrifice his life for the principle of violent revolution, al-Ṭabarī's Ḥusayn displays some Jārūdī Zaydī tendencies, which had been on the ascent in the Shīʿī world since the head of the Zaydī community had introduced Jaʿfarī Shīʿism to the Zaydī world at the turn of the ninth century.[444] Ḥusayn approaches Jaʿfarī positions on issues like *taqiyya* (dissimulation for the purpose of safety) and his tacit recognition that descendants of the Prophet through his daughter Fāṭima and his cousin ʿAlī are an exalted class of people. Thus, not only does al-Ṭabarī stand in the gap between "orthodox" proto-Sunnism and

[443] Ibid, 109.

[444] This politician was Yaḥyā ibn ʿAbdallāh (d. 803); for the contrast between Jārūdīs and Batrīs, cf. Haider, *Shīʿism*, 103ff.

"extremist" proto-Twelverism, but he even fits between the two poles of the centrist Zaydī movement: with the contemporary Jārūdīs he affirms the priority of ʿAlī's household and the legitimacy of ʿAlī's (and Ḥusayn's) negotiations for peace, while with the nearly-defunct Batrīs he affirms the repentance of those who later Shīʿites would regard as reprobate apostates.

This affirmation can be found in al-Ṭabarī's treatment of the caliph Yazīd after Ḥusayn's catastrophic defeat. While later Twelver Shīʿites would consider Yazīd and his deputies to be beyond the possibility of redemption, al-Ṭabarī casts Yazīd in an overwhelmingly positive and contrite light after the slaughter of Ḥusayn and his followers. This stance once again mirrors the early Zaydī position that was much more willing to forgive those who supported Abū Bakr and ʿUmar over and against ʿAlī for the position of caliph of the *umma*. While those who did not believe ʿAlī to be the Prophet's rightful successor clearly erred, they later repented and thus are not apostates. Later Shīʿites, including the Jārūdī Zaydīs, would challenge this position, but al-Ṭabarī seems to affirm it in his treatment of Ḥusayn's ultimate executioner. After the battle Ibn Ziyād parades Ḥusayn's severed head back to Damascus and gives it to Yazīd. Initially Yazīd treats it with contempt; he pokes the mouth with a stick. But upon being reminded that the Prophet of God used to kiss that very mouth, Yazīd is overcome with shame and devotes the rest of his reign to protecting what remains of the Prophet's household. He not only provides for ʿAlī's sister and children, but he seems genuinely to care for them. Al-Ṭabarī tells us that "Yazīd never ate lunch or dinner without inviting ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn to join him" and then puts the following words in Yazīd's mouth: "If I had been with your father, he would never have asked a favor from me without my granting it to him; I would have protected him from death with all my power, even through the destruction of some of my own children."[445] Like the opponents of ʿAlī

[445] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh,* 172.

in the Batrī Zaydī narrative, the archrival to Ḥusayn repents of his sin; he devotes the rest of his caliphate to providing for Ḥusayn's family. Undoubtedly there is some historical truth to this narrative—how else would Ḥusayn's son have survived to inherit the Imamate?—but this still resembles a Batrī approach to those who slaughter God's chosen ones.

Al-Khwārizmī is yet another example of the fluidity between Sunnism and Shīʿism vis-à-vis the ʿAlid camp in the Abbasid age, and thus his sectarian identity has implications for the scope of this project. Considered by most scholars to be Sunnī, Imāmī Shīʿites nevertheless hold him in great esteem and Shīʿite scholars use his *maqtal* as one of their seminal texts from his era.[446] Historians generally consider al-Iṣfahānī to be a Zaydī Shīʿite, though his descent from the Umayyad caliph Marwan I further points to the abovementioned fluidity. As influential as al-Iṣfahānī has been on Sunnī scholarship, his influence pales when compared to his fellow Zaydī al-Ṭabarī.

Not only does al-Ṭabarī stand in the gap between Shīʿī and proto-Sunnī, but as we have seen he even occupies the space between the older proto-Sunnī Batrī and the contemporary pro-Shīʿī Jārūdī Zaydī positions. He therefore stands as a testament to the presence of ambiguous sectarian identities in early tenth century Baghdad: despite the niches into which his critics and scholars like to put him, he defies simple sectarian categorization. Rather, al-Ṭabarī stands where many likely stood in the pluralistic environment of Islam's "Golden Age"—he sympathizes with ʿAlī and the Prophet's household, but he is neither denominational nor one-dimensional. The case of al-Ṭabarī is a microcosm of the incredible juristic and theological diversity in the early tenth century. He stands, therefore, as an ecumenical challenge to the notion of rigid sectarian identity. By the time of al-Khwārizmī, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, and Ibn Ṭāwūs, Muslims had begun

[446] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering,* 21.

self-identifying on a large scale. Therefore, while Sebastian Günther and others may be correct that al-Iṣfahānī represents "the apogee of the *maqātil* as a historical-biographical sub-category of classical Arabic literature," late Abbasid hagiographers may exemplify classical *maqātil* as formulated by the Twelver community.[447]

Borrut and Günter are correct that the zenith of *maqtal* as a historical genre is al-Iṣfahānī's account (and, some would argue, al-Ṭabarī's presentation of al-Kalbī's preservation of Abū Mikhnaf as well), but it is not necessary to conclude as Borrut does that hagiographical accounts of Ḥusayn's death should not be classified as true *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* (a point to which we will turn at the end of this chapter). Even the earliest memories were not history as the discipline is understood contemporarily: they have polemical and rhetorical dimensions and, while more "historical" than their late Abbasid correlates, nevertheless contain hagiographical elements. As these scholars have conceded, the subgenre was constantly developing, and the story becoming more elaborate, between the earliest accounts and that of al-Iṣfahānī. It seems likely, then, that the shift from history to hagiography was gradual, not a punctuated event. The three late Abbasid *maqātil* germane to this study can, therefore, be understood as representative of the subgenre in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—albeit a Twelver Shīʿite appropriation thereof. With Sindawi I accept al-Khwārizmī, Ibn Namā, and Ibn Ṭāwūs as authentic *maqtal* writers, even if they are hagiographical. The question of how to identify true *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* must take into account the fluidity of communal memory, the socio-political differentiations both of and within nascent Shīʿism, and the developing theological interpretations of the historical events. The three late Abbasid texts are emblematic of the subgenre *for their time*, and are

[447] "Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī," In the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*. ed. Gudrun Krämer *et. al*. (2014), http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/abu-l-faraj-al-isfahani-COM_0105.

particularly useful for this study because they come from a time of transition in both pro-ʿAlid self-understanding and in the conceived ontological status of Ḥusayn himself.

The shift from history to hagiography coincided with the self-differentiation of an Imāmī Shīʿism more "radical" than its Zaydī predecessor in terms of the special spiritual status they attribute to *ahl al-bayt,* the household of the Prophet and to the question of whether succession to the Imamate should be patrilineal. This is to be expected: early pro-ʿAlid moderates recognized both the legitimacy of the ruling dynasties and the esteemed position of the Prophet's family. Even the early Zaydīs who revolted did so for the sake of social justice more than out of an apocalyptic devotion to the cult of ʿAlī. With the emergence of Imāmī Shīʿism, there was less impetus to give more than lip service to the "Sunnī" powers (though the emerging doctrine of *taqiyya,* dissimulation for the protection of one's welfare, did allow for this lip service).[448] The Imāmī focus on the esoteric meaning of revelation related to its doctrine of the Imam, an infallible interpreter of the Qurʾān and the ultimate arbiter in legal matters. The Imamate gained a cosmological dimension at the same time as it was visibly receding; Shīʿa martyrology blames "poisoning" for the deaths of those Imams who might seem to have died natural deaths, and Twelver eschatology posits that the twelfth and final Imam is not dead but rather in hiding until the end of the age. Thus it is only natural that those most interested in preserving Imam Ḥusayn's legacy would laud him and associate him with the miraculous and the transcendent. The process

[448] The terms "Imāmī" and "Jaʿfarī" are often used synonymously with "Twelver" (as is even "Shīʿī!"), but they are better understood as discrete terms. I use "Imāmī" to describe those Shīʿites who recognized Muḥammad al-Bāqir (Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq's father, d. 733) as the legitimate successor to Ḥusayn's son ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn rather than the latter's younger son, Zayd. The reasons for this dispute played out in the eventual divide between the Zaydīs and the Imāmīs: Muḥammad al-Bāqir, though the oldest son and supposed designated heir, was a political quietist while Zayd, who did not have the same spiritual mandate to lead, was active in his resistance to what he perceived as corrupt powers. Zaydism (for the most part) remained a political movement while Imāmī Shīʿism (which was to include the "Sevener" Ismāʿīlīs and the Twelvers) was often underground and developed a rich esoteric tradition. "Jaʿfarī" refers to the specific school of law which traces itself back to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765).

that led to this differentiation was a slow one fueled by socio-political conditions and sacred memories—historical, embellished, and fabricated.

This chapter has established Ḥusayn's role in the ʿAshurāʾ drama and the fluidity of sectarian identifications among pro-ʿAlids in the Abbasid era. This fluidity is vital, for at the moment of the compilation of the late-Abbasid *maqātil*, sects remained fluid, so this dissertation remains germane not merely to the Twelver tradition but to Islam writ large. There are many sources of devotional material about Ḥusayn's passion; my focus is on the *maqātil* because of their narrative nature and rooting in early pro-ʿAlid traditions about Ḥusayn. This study contributes to the larger body of analysis of late Abbasid *maqātil*, and it is to these martyrologies that the next two chapters turn. This chapter has set the stage by recounting the narrative and characters of the Karbalāʾ story. It then looked at the history of the *maqtal* genre and its appropriation by later Shīʿites, describing our primary sources and presenting secondary scholarship. Finally, it demonstrated the fluidity of sects in the late political Abbasid age, establishing that our project has ramifications beyond the Twelver community. Now we are ready to approach the texts from a contextualised vantage point. Something of the late Abbasid ethos outlives the fourth generation and has ramifications for a wider doctrine of God.

Chapter V: "*Do Not Let Them Taste a Drop of It*": The Motif of Liquids

Having defined a narrative theological method of seeing the divine "from below" through liminal heroes, I laid out Moltmann's challenge to strict impassibility in Chapter III. Then, in Chapter IV, I reviewed recent literature on *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* martyrologies and sketched the contours of the battle of Karbalāʾ as remembered by ʿAlī's partisans. In this chapter I argue for a reading of Ḥusayn as a liminal hero, showing how the flowing of the human and the divine into one another can be seen in the late Abbasid *maqātil* through the motif of liquids going into and coming out of human bodies. As we shall see, in the drama of liquid intake and output, the *maqtal* writers present a Ḥusayn who is simultaneously great and small, divinely favored and subject to the extreme limitations of arch-humanity.

Water-based liquids are essential to life, and in arid regions they are particularly precious. As the story of Ḥusayn's martyrdom grew, so did its reliance on fluids as a means for indicating joy and despair, blessedness and forsakenness. When all is well, liquids abound; when hope is fading, liquids drain and recede. The abundance of liquid, which is a sign of fecundity, life, and cosmic harmony, is an eschatological motif paired with its opposite, the scarcity of resources and of right order. The religious scholars al-Khwārizmī, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, and Ibn Ṭāwūs wrote their *maqātil* martyrologies in the 12th and 13th centuries as the Abbasid empire was waning. All three drew on earlier *maqātil*, on quasi-Sunnī accounts like al-Ṭabarī's and al-Iṣfahānī's, and on the reports of Twelver Imams, in order to reconstruct Ḥusayn's birth, life, and death. This chapter contains an analysis of the shared motif of liquids in the genre.

A common pattern in *maqātil* texts is a chronological pivot. They open with material in which prophets, especially Muḥammad, anticipate Karbalāʾ and in which events connected with

the Holy Family prefigure Ḥusayn's martyrdom. After giving accounts of the battle itself, they describe the aftermath—historically in earlier pro-ʿAlid martyrologies, and eschatologically in developed Twelver versions. At each of the three turns—pre-680, Ḥusayn's passion, and the aftermath of Karbalāʾ—the interaction between bodies and fluids is a prominent theme. Certainly there is a historical basis for it: the earliest sources describe the army of Ibn Ziyād cutting Ḥusayn's camp off from the sustenance of the Euphrates and the latter profusely shedding blood and tears. Still, these three later *maqātil* add symbolic significance to this historical theme through the addition of a variety of narrative and literary elements. Taking a close look at the ways in which the *maqātil* depict liquids, it becomes clear that there is a strong connection between these fluids and depictions of virtue and vice. Partisans of the Prophet's family take in liquids during moments of triumph or beatitude and shed them during moments of despair and defeat. The same holds true for partisans of the Umayyads, though there always seems to be a dialectic between the two parties: when one is blessed, the other is cursed, so liquids nearly always flow in one direction. At Ḥusayn's death his connection to blood and potables mirrors that of Jesus at his passion in a parallelism that seems likely to be intentional. Mahmoud Ayoub has argued that this narrative echoing is a way of intentionally analogizing the two liminal heroes. An additional sign of divine favor is the sharing of fluids between two righteous people; such sharing is always reserved for supporters of Ḥusayn. First, I will focus on the sharing of fluids in the story of Ḥusayn's life; then I will discuss one-way liquid flow in the three moments outlined above: Ḥusayn before Karbalāʾ, the camp at the battlefield, and the aftermath of the massacre. The two-way exchange of liquids has a different soteriological function from the one-way flow, as I will establish below: the former points to beatitude while the latter toward themes of righteousness.

Exchange of Liquids

Before Ḥusayn's birth and during his early years, liquids flow in two directions.[449] The child himself is described as being the fruit of Muḥammad's fluids: the Prophet calls him *mazāj mā'ī*, literally "the mixture of my water," an allusion to semen, and his lifeblood (*muhjatī*).[450] Ḥusayn himself puts off bodily fluids in seeming anticipation of the blood he is destined to shed and the thirst he is expected to suffer on the plains of Karbalā'. Much is made of his urine, as well. In one oft-repeated tradition within the Twelver community, his nursemaid Umm al-Faḍl pinches Ḥusayn's urethra after the baby urinates on the Prophet's garment. Muḥammad's response is to chastise Umm al-Faḍl and send her for water so that she can wash the child; in the meanwhile, the Prophet melts into tears in anticipation of the blood that will pour forth at the end of Ḥusayn's life.[451] These two who each shed liquids often share them with each other, and in doing so reveal something about Ḥusayn's liminality: from the outset he is simultaneously divinely favored and beset by suffering.

Ḥusayn participates in the sharing of life-sustaining liquids in his infancy. In order to shield Fāṭima from the grief of knowing that her second son has been born fated to be martyred (which Muḥammad knows from a series of visions but his daughter does not), the Prophet gives the infant to the aforementioned Umm al-Faḍl. She shares her breast milk with Ḥusayn, nourishing him and prompting the Prophet to give her a lavish gift and high praise.[452] In another story, Ḥusayn gets his nourishment not from Umm al-Faḍl's breast milk but rather directly from Muḥammad's saliva; when his grandfather cannot find any water for the thirsty child, "He put

[449] The two-way flow is almost exclusively seen when both parties involved are considered righteous. When one party is unjust, fluids flow in only one direction.
[450] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 15.
[451] Ibid, 13; cf. 32; al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 210.
[452] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 13.

his tongue into the mouth of the boy, who began to suck on it hungrily," until his thirst is assuaged.[453] The pair frequently exchange saliva. Muḥammad is depicted as "drinking" (*yarshif*) Ḥusayn's front teeth with his mouth.[454] The same term is used to describe what the Prophet often did to his grandsons' front teeth (*thanāyā*).[455] When an onlooker rebukes the grandfather for being so physically affectionate, the latter responds by connecting this behavior to morality: "He who does not show mercy is not treated with mercy."[456] The *maqtal* writers describe Muḥammad's kisses frequently and in detail: at one point he kisses Ḥasan and Ḥusayn so much that he loses consciousness; another time he kisses Ḥusayn's eyes.[457] On one striking occasion we even read that the Prophet "lifted up [al-Ḥusayn's] shirt and kissed his penis (*zabīb*)," prompting a companion to follow in Muḥammad's footsteps—nearly.[458] To emulate the prophet's *sunna*, Abū Hurayra has Ḥusayn lift his shirt and proceeds to kiss his belly button (*surra*).[459]

Muḥammad kisses Ḥusayn on three orifices from which liquids emerge—mouth, eyes, and penis—which highlights the theme of the relationship between bodily fluids and divine favor. Muḥammad's nightly ritual involving another source of bodily fluids with Fāṭima—the woman who unites the two lineally—can be seen as an extension of the same theme: "The

[453] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 76; al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 221.

[454] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 8; al-Khwārizmī uses the verb *yamuṣṣu* (sucked, soaked up, sipped, licked up) to describe what the Prophet habitually did to Ḥusayn's older brother Ḥasan; in this particular account the only ambiguity is whether Muḥammad performed that action on the child's tongue (*lisānahu*) or lip (*shafatahu*). Ibid, 152.

[455] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*,.

[456] Ibid, 153.

[457] Ibid, 169; 212; 152.

[458] For Fatema Mernissi's observation that the habit of kissing a boys penis is connected to the female role in establishing patriarchy rather than an act of sexual violence, cf. Jessica A. Folkart, *Liminal Fiction at the Edge of the Millennium: The Ends of Spanish Identity* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2014), 178.

[459] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 213.

Messenger of God (saaw) would never sleep before kissing Fāṭima on her cheeks and her bosom."[460]

Saliva and Mud

One of the curiosities in the Twelver *maqātil* is the downplaying of ʿAlī's special status considering that the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law is greatly revered in Twelver piety. Twelvers generally consider him to be the closest that Muḥammad has to an equal. Their profession of faith demonstrates this: "I testify that there is no God but God; I testify that Muḥammad is God's messenger; I testify that ʿAlī is God's vicegerent."[461] Indeed, ʿAlī, the Qurʾān, and even God are relatively minor characters in these dramas; they focus more sharply on Muḥammad, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn. Still, the Twelver tradition recalls two episodes in which the adult ʿAlī approaches the Prophet with inflamed or irritated eyes; on both occasions Muḥammad solves this annoyance miraculously by spitting in, therefore soothing, the eyes of Ḥusayn's father.[462] Whether or not the *maqātil* authors had in mind Jesus' healing of the blind man with spittle and mud in Mark 8:23 and elsewhere, there healing power certainly emanates from the Prophet's body.[463]

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[460] Ibid, 108. This pattern may not extend to Fāṭima: Muḥammad does not kiss her breasts directly, but rather the space between them (*bayna thadayhā*).

[461] ʿAlī's position, *walīy Allāh*, is difficult to translate without reading theological convictions into the creed. *Walīy* can mean friend, saint, lieutenant, etc. Regardless, though, ʿAlī has a unique relationship not just to Muḥammad but also to God. Cf. Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, "Shahada:" https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/shahada. Another Shīʿite branch, the Mustāʿlī Ismāʿīlīs, does not even regard ʿAlī as an Imam, since he is not a descendent of the Prophet; cf. Haider, *Shīʿism*.

[462] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 176.

[463] A similar story is recorded by a rough contemporary of our three *maqtal* writers, ʿAbdallāh Nur Allāh al-Baḥrānī (d. 1299?). When Fāṭima is close to conceiving Ḥusayn she falls ill only to be revived when she drinks a mixture of water and her father's spit. The pregnancy that follows does not include thirst; she feels "rather as if she were constantly satiated with milk and honey." Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 71.

Liquids signify abundance and cosmic harmony; from the Shīʿa perspective the Umayyads disrupt this balance by usurping power from God's chosen household after the Prophet's death. Three specific instances of liquid exchange are interesting at this point. In Ḥusayn's childhood, such exchange signifies beatitude. In his interactions with the Umayyad officer al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāḥī al-Tamīmī there is an exchange of benevolence focused on the Euphrates River. And in the interesting motif of poison, the theme is inverted—the exchange of liquids is tied to suffering. While poison saps life, other liquids sustain it. I will discuss these moments in coming sections.

The Prophet's Stock

Ahl al-Bayt (the People of the Household) are interconnected through a range of liquid imagery. Ibn Ṭāwūs recounts that Ḥusayn's inheritance of Muḥammad's qualities is described thus: "the fruit of the heart of the Messenger (saaw) and the apple of the Pure one's [i.e. Fāṭima's] eye [has been entrusted] to those whose front teeth he used to drink in with his noble mouth."[464] The famous *Ḥadīth al-Thaqalayn* is often cited by both Sunnīs and Shīʿīs to describe the two treasures that the Muslim community inherited from its Prophet.[465] In the Sunnī version, the community is the recipient of both the Qurʾān and the Prophet's example (*sunnah*), which it can emulate. According to the Shīʿī version, on the contrary, the Imam of one's time rather than the practices of the past guides the community in righteousness. The *ḥadīth* as al-Khwārizmī quotes it reflects this shift of focus; Muḥammad interestingly references both temporal and cosmological liquids in describing the "two weighty things: the Book of God, and my lineage

[464] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* Intro/8. See Chapter VI for a full analysis of the *degree* to which Ḥusayn assumes the Muḥammadan office and participates in the Prophetic Light.
[465] Haider, *Shīʿism*, 58 ff.

and family tree, the mixture of my water, my fruits. The two shall not be separated until my pool (*ḥawḍ*) is returned to me."[466]

It is not uncommon for Shīʿa scholars to interpret passages of the Qurʾān in order to reveal their "hidden" or esoteric true meanings; these interpretations frequently justify the imāmate and declare the unique status of the Prophet's household.[467] This is partially because people like ʿAlī, Fāṭima, and Ḥusayn are not explicitly named in the Qurʾān. On at least one occasion, al-Khwārizmī uncovers the *implicit* mention of the four Infallibles whom Muḥammad took under his cloak.[468] This interpretation (*taʾwīl*) uses three *āyāt* from *Sūrat al-Raḥmān* [Q 55] to connect the Holy Family to the theme of water:

> When the Almighty said "He has let free the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together", [it means] ʿAlī and Fāṭima. "Between them is a Barrier they do not transgress" means friendship which they do not [adulterate with] hatred. "Out of them come Pearls and Coral" means al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.[469]

The boys are the bounty of the sea, and Ḥusayn in particular is a water-born gift of life for those who act justly. Liquid is a holy gift for those who receive it.

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[466] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn,* 239. The *ḥawḍ* is the pool from which people will be given to drink on the Day of Judgment. Another striking feature in these three *maqātil* is that they normatively refer to heaven as "the pool" (*al-ḥawḍ*) instead of the more common term "the garden" (*al-janna*). This phrasing keeps the readership cognizant of the dialectic of liquids in and out on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ.

[467] Cf. Haider, *Shīʿism*, 93ff.

[468] In the story of *Ahl al-Kisāʾ*, the Prophet gathers Ḥusayn, Ḥasan, Fāṭima, and ʿAlī under his cloak and prays for both protection and purification for the five of them; Shīʿa apologists make frequent recourse to this story (which normative Sunnism does not refute) in order to demonstrate the superiority of the Prophet's close relatives. The term "Infallibles" (*al-maʿsūmūn*) gradually acquired doctrinal significance in Twelver Shīʿism as a category for Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Ḥasan, as well as the eight acknowledged patrilineal Imams from Ḥusayn to the Mahdī, who went into various stages of Occultation in 874 and 941.

[469] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn,* 168. The Qurʾānic material comes from Q 55:19-21.

Ḥusayn and al-Ḥurr

The two-way flow of liquids is a theme that continues during the next moment of the narrative, the ʿĀshūrāʾ drama itself. Here al-Ḥurr presents as a just person. A moment of redemption at Karbalāʾ, discussed at length in the previous chapter, is the conversion of the Umayyad general al-Ḥurr to Ḥusayn's lost cause when overcome by his conscience. Al-Ḥurr and Ḥusayn search for days for a peaceful resolution to the conflict that would satisfy both Yazīd's orders and Ḥusayn's sense of justice. On the third of the month of Muḥarram (the battle will take place on the tenth), Ibn Ziyād orders al-Ḥurr to cut off Ḥusayn's ragtag band of devotees from the only available water supply, the Euphrates, with the words "Do not let them taste a drop of it."[470] During the ensuing standoff, Ḥusayn's benevolence is on full display: he refuses to instigate fighting even though the enemy is receiving daily reinforcements; he tries to send his companions away in the darkness of night, assuring them that there is no shame in them saving their skins; and he shows mercy to his enemy through his outreach to al-Ḥurr.[471] Even before al-Ḥurr's defection, Ḥusayn offers al-Ḥurr and his horse to drink from his dwindling supply of water and leads both groups in the appointed prayers.[472] Blessed by Ḥusayn's mercy and persuaded by Ḥusayn's righteous bloodline, al-Ḥurr and a few of his associates switch sides; al-Ḥurr will soon become one of Karbalāʾ's first martyrs. Here there is an implicit exchange of

[470] Mufīd, cited in Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 109; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 107.

[471] Ḥusayn's love for enemies is seen as early as the Ridda wars fought between ʿAlī's Caliphate and various secessionists. When the young Ḥusayn sees one of his father's prisoners struggle with the pain of ropes tied too tightly around his wrists, the former begs the Caliph to have pity on this enemy. ʿAlī is moved by Ḥusayn's compassion and complies – the object of mercy turns out to be Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan, who would later prove to be the cruelest of Ibn Ziyād's officers at Karbalāʾ and is often accused of executing Ḥusayn. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 75.

[472] Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team . "The Tragedy of Kalbala'" on Al-Islam.org (n.d.), https://www.al-islam.org/tragedy-karbala.

liquids, as Ḥurr's defection is a refusal to deny Ḥusayn's motley crew access to the river, while the Imam reciprocates with this generous offer.

Blood for Poison

Before moving to the one-way flow of liquids, it is interesting to note an exception to the theme of liquid exchange being a marker of divine favor. An inversion of the fluid-exchange theme concerns poison, wherein liquid does not give life but death. An abundance of life-giving liquid is a sign of wholeness, while its paucity marks brokenness. At times liquids do not give life but death and are linked to suffering, both physically and cosmologically. In the case of poison, this liquid is life-draining and is tied to strife. On one occasion, in his final minutes, Ḥusayn simultaneously takes in and puts off fluids as the result of injustice. Exhausted and nearing his demise, Ḥusayn receives a rock to the head which causes blood to gush forth.[473] As he is trying to control the bleeding, he is greeted with a three-headed, poison-tipped arrow to the heart. In a sense, his body is infused with liquid to replenish that which has been lost, but unlike other moments of exchanged liquids, this one does not celebrate the party that causes both the loss and gain of fluids.

Poisoning is an occasion for liquids both to enter into and to depart from a body. This theme is present in several traditions about Ḥusayn's older brother Ḥasan. Twelver legend holds that Ḥasan, the second Twelver Imam, died of poisoning rather than natural causes.[474] This

[473] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 71.

[474] Traditionally, Muʿāwiya, Yazīd's father and predecessor, bribed Ḥasan's wife Jaʿda to poison her husband. While there is no historical substantiation for this claim, there are complexities to this case. Consider that it is important that Imams attain their final glory through martyrdom. Madelung, *Succession*, 331f. Other Twelver Imams whose deaths are considered to have been by poisoning include the fifth through eleventh ones (Ḥusayn's son through his great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson).

manner of death has cosmic reverberance. Red and green are (together with black and white) traditional Islamic colors, but for the Shīʿa they are particularly important. A common report suggests that there are twelve gates to Paradise and that the two most prominent are red (the gate of Ḥusayn) and green (the gate of Ḥasan).[475] Red makes obvious sense: in vexillology and heraldry, red almost universally represents the blood of those who have sacrificed for the symbol's cause. In the case of Ḥusayn and Ḥasan (who are colored in red and green from infancy), the green stands for the color that one turns when being poisoned. Muḥammad is told, "Your people (*umma*) will kill (*taqtulu*) al-Ḥasan with poison, and he will turn green. As for al-Ḥusayn, your people will kill him by the sword, and he will be stained with blood and will turn red." In other words, Ḥasan, like Ḥusayn, dies through the shedding of bodily fluids, and the righteous enter heaven through these sacrifices. In this eschatological moment the believer is simply the beneficiary of the shedding of cosmically imbued fluids. The liminal members of *Ahl al-Bayt* similarly benefit from other-worldly liquid infusions, as will be discussed further below.

Liquid Flow before Karbalāʾ

The *maqtal* texts point to a prefiguration of Ḥusayn's martyrdom, that is seen in two modes: (a) lengthy accounts of prophetic foreknowledge of what is in store for Ḥusayn, and (b) narratives of the intense grief shared by Muḥammad and Fāṭima at the knowledge that Ḥusayn will be killed by his *umma*. Blood, water, and other liquids play a prominent role in conveying

[475] Note that in normative Sunnism there are eight, rather than twelve, doors of janna; these are often understood to be designated for Muslims who performed specific acts of piety such as prayer or jihad rather than corresponding to particular pious figures. For a list, see Ibn Masud . "Jannah it's [sic.] Doors levels and Grades," (2013), https://sunnahmuakada.wordpress.com/2013/02/14/jannah-its-doors-levels-and-grades/.

these stories. The cosmos, nature, early prophets, Muḥammad, and Fāṭima all have an ominous foreknowledge of Ḥusayn's fate; meanwhile Ḥusayn remains innocent to that which awaits him.

The maqtal texts depict nature and prophets as having foreknowledge of Ḥusayn's suffering and as participating in the drama of Karbalāʾ through their mourning. This mourning in turn serves as a narrative harbinger of the martyrdom to come. Blood and tears are key elements of these narratives, anticipating the roles that these fluids will play in Ḥusayn's passion. The ground of Karbalāʾ consists of "parched earth" even though the soil is alternately said either to smell of or transform into Ḥusayn's blood, even centuries before his birth. [476] This ground is almost sentient, and even the gazelles that graze it anticipate Ḥusayn's martyrdom. Prophets who pass by Karbalāʾ, including Noah, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad, are struck by visions foretelling Ḥusayn's martyrdom, reducing them to tears.[477] The earth that they scoop up from under that tree is often saturated in or smells of blood.[478] As the cosmos anticipates Ḥusayn's loss, it prefigures the shedding of his holy lifeblood; as it celebrates his divine nature, it offers life-giving fluids to him. The end result is a depiction of a Ḥusayn who is simultaneously above the human realm and thoroughly subject to it, i.e., a liminal figure, a person who stands "in the gap" between the two ultimate realms.

Thus the *maqātil* do not simply recount the tragedy of Karbalāʾ; they also depict the cosmos as anticipating it. A sense of foreboding permeates creation and the prophetic realm long before Ḥusayn apprehends his fate. This foreboding continues into the time of the Prophet and of Ḥusayn's youth, and here again liquids play an important role in foreshadowing Ḥusayn's

[476] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 6.

[477] Cf. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 237f., in which tears are connected to the fragrance of soil and gazelle dung when Jesus passes through Karbalāʾ; Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 31ff.

[478] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 241, 246, etc.

martyrdom. The *maqātil* associate loss of fluids with death not only literally but also literarily; this is evident not just from their depictions of Fāṭima but also of her father. Liminial heroes cry not just physically but apocalyptically. Muḥammad is moved to tears repeatedly when he encounters the young Ḥusayn and foresees the tragedy of Karbalāʾ. For his part, Ḥusayn gives off bodily fluids from birth just as much as he takes them in. The *maqtal* authors make a point of describing these secretions in uncharacteristic detail. We have encountered a sampling of urine-centered traditions earlier; there are many more instances in which Ḥusayn's urination is described positively. This motif can call to mind the tears and blood that he is destined to shed in adulthood.

The members of Ḥusayn's extended household, especially his mother and grandfather, suffer immensely at the prospect of his doom. As noted above, Ḥusayn receives life-giving breast milk, saliva, and water at the Prophet's will. He is not the only such recipient. Fāṭima and her children are frequently financially desperate, and as such they lack food, water, and clothing, hinting at a pattern that will revisit Ḥusayn in his final days. When the situation becomes most desperate, divine intervention (discussed at length in the next chapter) provides for them what they cannot provide for themselves.[479] Liquids once again play a role. On one occasion, Fāṭima's hunger leads to "pallor appear[ing] on her face," during which her face's "blood went away." Muḥammad places his open hand between her breasts and begs for God's aid. Suddenly she begins to feel better, and her rosy complexion reappears through the return of her blood circulation (*qad ẓaharat ʿalā wajhihā wa-dhahaba al-damm*).[480] For Fāṭima, the end of life also

[479] This intervention can take the form of miracles, dreams / visions, or the transcending of the membrane between the human and the divine. This chapter only discusses supernatural intervention that involves liquids, though this category is more represented than one might expect.

[480] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 103.

centers on liquids; sensing her father's impending demise, she gently washes the sweat from his holy brow and helps him with the ritual ablution (*wuḍūʾ*).[481] Sensing her own impending mortality, she makes one final ablution (prompting her friend Salmā to recount, "she washed herself as well as I had ever seen her wash herself") and then lies down with her hands under her face oriented toward the Kaʿba in Mecca and dies peacefully "in a state of purity"—i.e., she is ritually immaculate.[482] The gaining of liquids restores life and prepares one for a good death.[483] Still, even in these pre-Karbalāʾ years, Ḥusayn and his family cannot resist experiencing the slow but inevitable arrival of the martyr's final hour. Karbalāʾ is prefigured well before the month of Muḥarram in 680. Fāṭima's experience displays this prefigurement.

Fāṭima, the Mary to Ḥusayn's Jesus (a concept developed in the next chapter), preveniently ascertains Ḥusayn's destiny and sobs. Her tears prompt the Prophet and the attending angels to cry out (*taṣrukh*) which in turn moves God to a remarkably un-stoic anger (*yaghḍab*) and the stoking of a special hellfire for the killers.[484] Fāṭima's tears continue in

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[481] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān,* 13; the theme of Muḥammad's sweat is found throughout the stories of his death by illness. As Muḥammad lies on his deathbed Ḥusayn approaches him. The Prophet embraces his grandson and we are told that the former's sweat poured down on the latter (*yasīl min ʿaraqihi ʿalayhi*). He then passes out only to wake up in tears, his mind only on Ḥusayn and Yazīd (al-Ḥillī, Birth /39). In another account, "he embraced al-Ḥusayn, some of his sweat pouring down on him [as] he gave up the ghost, and said: 'What of me, and what of Yazīd?'" Ibid, 39.

[482] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn,* 126.

[483] Certainly there is nothing new about the washing of a body either immediately before or immediately after death; what is important here is the *continuity* with which liquids sustain holy people in their liminal connections with the divine realm. The liminality itself almost takes the form of the flow of fluids.

[484] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān,* 120. The full report is as follows: "The Prophet (pbuh) said: On the Day of Judgment, Fāṭima shall come forward in a group of her female relatives. It will be said to her: 'Enter Paradise.' She will say: 'I shall not enter until I see what was done to my son after my death.' It will be said to her: 'Look into the heart of the Resurrection.' She will look and see al-Ḥusayn (as) standing there without a head. She will cry out (*taṣrukhu ṣarkhatan*), and I [the Prophet] will cry out (*aṣrukhu*) at the sound of her cry (*ṣurākh*), and the angels will cry out (*taṣrukhu*) at the sound of her cry (*ṣurākh*).

"According to one account, she will call out: 'O my son! O fruit of my heart!' God, praised and exalted be He, will be angry on her behalf. He will summon a fiery pit of Hell called Hab Hab that had been set alight a thousand years ago [and had burned] until it had turned black, [an inferno] which no spirit (*rūḥ*) enters, and from which no sorrow (*ghamm*) emerges. It will be said: 'Seize the killers (*qatala*) of al-Ḥusayn.' [The fire] will seize them, and when they are in its craw, it will whine hoarsely, and they will whine hoarsely in it, and it will gasp, and they will gasp in

Heaven. Ḥusayn meets his mother in Paradise holding his severed head in his hands. At this, Fāṭima is inconsolable.[485] Her son's martyrdom remains forever with her. As she passes "through the courtyards of Resurrection" she is "wrapped in a garment watered by the blood (*thawb makhḍūb bi-damm*) of Ḥusayn, so that she may hold the leg of the Throne."[486] Fāṭima herself must enter Paradise through her son's unspeakable suffering, a paradigm that has permeated Twelver Shīʿism since its emergence.

Liquid Flow at Karbalāʾ

Yazīd and the Umayyad Soldiers

Nowhere is Ḥusayn's arch-humanity seen more clearly than on the plains of Karbalāʾ. His suffering is total; his reprieve is absent. He watches those dearest to him die horrible deaths one by one. He sheds blood, tears, and sweat, yet he cannot replenish them with even a sip of water. Some other characters in the ʿĀshūrāʾ story are, in contrast, consistently the recipients of liquids. Winebibbers are among Ḥusayn's adversaries and are constantly discredited because of their consumption.[487] A companion of Ḥusayn rebukes an enemy soldier with the condemnation "you are the wine drinker (*shārib al-khamr*)."[488] This feature is not restricted to foot soldiers: the Caliph Yazīd I has had an infamous reputation among Shīʿites as a libertine who neglected the

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it, and it will groan, and they will groan in it. Then they will speak eloquently, saying: 'O Lord! Why has this fire been made for us before the idol-worshipers?' The answer will come from the presence of God, praised and exalted be He: 'Those who know are not like those who do not know.'"

[485] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 81.

[486] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 19. He reports on page 91 another version of this story in which Fāṭima's garment is soaked in *māʾ al-ḥayawān*. While a literal translation would be "animal water," there is some precedent for translating this term as "the Water of Life." See, for example, page 76 of Abū al-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī's "Risalat al-Ghufran," ed. and trans. Geert Jan van Gelder and Gregor Schoeler. *Library of Arabic Literature* (New York: NYU Press, 2013). A correspondence between the blood of Ḥusayn and the Water of Life might therefore exist.

[487] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 98.

[488] Ibid, 98; the companions and the partisan are, respectively, Ḥabīb ibn Muẓāhir and Ibn Ḥaṣīn.

sharīʿa and enjoyed women, music, and wine.[489] The only liquid he puts out (prior to a possible later tearful repentance) is when he metaphorically "drools" (*tataḥallab*) like a vicious hyena, devouring the flesh of the righteous.[490]

Water, too, is the exclusive property of the Umayyad army. The soldiers who insert themselves between Ḥusayn's camp and the Euphrates drink their fill of water; they go so far as to murder al-ʿAbbās, Ḥusayn's half-brother, while al-ʿAbbās attempts to secure a pail of water for the desperate women and children. Hagiographers describe the valiant al-ʿAbbās as trudging back to the camp with the full water bucket in his hand and Ḥusayn's standard in the other.[491] When enemy archers shoot both his arms, he puts the bucket handle in his mouth. When the bucket is shot through with arrows and bleeds all of its water, he puts the flag in his mouth and staggers forward until he is finally killed. This man's dying wish had been to retrieve life-saving water for the most vulnerable; Twelvers to this day revere the heroism of al-ʿAbbās.[492] This is not the last moment in which the net flow of liquids is from the righteous toward the unrighteous. When Ḥusayn's decapitated head is brought to Yazīd, the latter takes it in his hands (*yaʾtī bi-raʾs al-Ḥusayn bayna yadayhi*) and drinks (*yashrab ʿalayhi*).[493] The partisans of Muḥammad's household are prone to losing fluids both during Karbalāʾ and, figuratively, afterward. This pattern of giving off fluids is one of the dominant motifs in the Karbalāʾ epic.

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[489] Haider, *Shīʿism*, 67.

[490] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 73.

[491] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 117. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, (Household Martyrdom/69f.) tells the story differently: "Al-Ḥusayn (as) was intensely thirsty (*ʿaṭash*). He climbed onto the jetty, heading for (*yurīd*) the Euphrates, and his brother al-ʿAbbās was with him. The horse of Ibn Saʿd blocked his path, and a man of the Banū Dārim shot al-Ḥusayn (as) with an arrow. It lodged in the lower corner of his noble mouth, and he removed (as) the arrow and spread out his hands below the lower corner of his mouth until both his palms filled with blood. Then he threw the blood and said: 'O Lord! I lament to You of what has been done to the grandson of Your Prophet.' Then they cut off al-ʿAbbās from him and surrounded him on all sides until they killed (*qatalū*) him, may God sanctify his spirit. Al-Ḥusayn wept bitterly (*bakā bukāʾan*) over his killing (*qatl*)."

[492] Al-ʿAbbās is particularly remembered on the ninth day of Muharram, the day before ʿAshurāʾ.

[493] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 33.

Output from the Holy Family's Camp at Karbalāʾ

The opportunity to take in liquid is severely restricted for Ḥusayn and his followers; their extreme thirst features prominently in the narrative drama. Only once do they experience rain on the battlefield, though it is not of the sort that quenches thirst: "arrows came forth from the people as though they were raindrops (*qaṭr*)."[494] While much later *maqātil* describe Ḥusayn's thirsty troops lining up to have their thirst quenched by sucking on Ḥusayn's thumb, these Abbasid-era accounts give the partisans no such reprieve. Their thirst is absolute and is a metaphor for their larger fate: just before being butchered on the battlefield, Ḥusayn's son complains, "Father, the thirst is killing me" (*al-ʿaṭash qatalanī*).[495] Taunting the Imam, one of Ibn Ziyad's soldiers shouts, "O Ḥusayn! Do you not see the water, as if it is the liver of Heaven? You shall not taste a drop of it until you and your companions die of thirst" (*tamūt ʿaṭashan*).[496] For their part, the companions are unwilling to quench their thirst as long as Ḥusayn's remains: the leader of a midnight expedition to the Euphrates to fill water skins, Nāfiʿ ibn Hilāl al-Jamalī, is spotted by one of Ibn Ziyad's guards who bids Nāfiʿ "to drink to [his] health." Ḥusayn's companion refuses, however, saying "I will not drink a drop of it while Ḥusayn is thirsty."[497]

On the battlefield, Ḥusayn simultaneously sheds his own fluids and tries to prevent his followers from doing so. Here we see themes of self-sacrifice and a pastoral instinct played out through the motif of liquids. He pleads with his companions to escape under the cover of darkness so as to avoid having their blood spilled and asks the women lamenting his impending

[494] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 60.
[495] Ibid, 103.
[496] Ibid, 105.
[497] Abū Mikhnaf in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 108.

demise to cease their tears.[498] This last point is especially striking considering the value attached to weeping for Ḥusayn in Twelver Shīʿism; Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Twelver Imam, declares: "If someone sheds (*bakā*) or makes someone else shed (*abkā*) one [tear], he shall go to Paradise. If someone tries to weep (*tabakkā*) [for us], he shall go to Paradise."[499] Ḥusayn himself bursts into tears repeatedly as his friends and family die one by one, yet he dries the eyes of those who would weep on his behalf. His death is particularly bloody and is juxtaposed with his extreme thirst. Ḥusayn's son ʿAlī, who was too ill to fight in the battle, suffered from a particularly extreme survivor's guilt. According to the *maqātil*, Zayn al-ʿĀbadīn (ʿAlī), the last Imām recognized by Zaydīs, Ismāʿīlīs, and Twelvers alike, fasted and wept for forty years, repeating the phrase "'The son of the Messenger of God was killed hungry, and the son of the Messenger of God was killed thirsty,' until his clothes became wet with tears" (*damʿ*).[500] Tears and thirst thus outlive Ḥusayn and continue to be important motifs for his devotees. They mark a community living in the between times, looking back on centuries of persecution and the martyrs who serve as their paradigm, yet also looking forward for reprieve and eschatological refreshment. The popular (though rarely sanctioned) process of self-flagellation during the first ten days of Muḥarram adds blood to this mix, uniting the devotees with the parched, blood-soaked, defeated martyrs of Karbalāʾ. Exhausted and dehydrated, Ḥusayn pleads with Shimr to pause the fighting and give him "a drink (*shurba*) of water, but none was given to him, until he was afflicted with seventy-two wounds."[501] A soldier taunts Ḥusayn: "You shall not taste a drop of it until you and your companions die (*tamūt*) of thirst (*ʿaṭash*)."[502] Thirst is even personified

[498] Ḥusayn orders his son ʿAlī, "Silence [the women] for, by my life, their weeping (*bukāʾ*) is excessive." Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 53.
[499] Ibid, 10.
[500] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 168.
[501] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* Household Martyrdom/71.
[502] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 105.

when, fighting for his life, Ḥusayn's son cries out the abovementioned, "Father, the thirst (*ʿaṭash*) is killing (*qatala*) me!"[503] The Euphrates, so close but utterly unattainable, is described as "the liver of Heaven."[504] The end of this chapter will explore what I identify as the Christic themes in this scene. The wilted decomposition of this defeated man is interesting here. Ibn Ṭāwūs offers a fitting eulogy for the Prophet's fallen grandson: "He died thirsty (*ʿaṭshān*)."[505] The simplicity of this statement, into which so much anxiety, suffering, and drama are packed, shows that Ibn Ṭāwūs communicates a lot with a little (*ījāz*, economy of meaning).

Tears and blood comingle in the thirsty camp. At the battle's end, the Umayyad forces set fire, water's stark opposite, to the women's shelters, forcing them to flee from one burning tent to another while "distressed, robbed of their possessions, barefoot, and weeping (*bākiyāt*)."[506] When Ḥusayn's sister Zaynab sees Ḥusayn's corpse, her grief is so extreme that it prompts survivors from both sides to weep.[507] The survivors are despondent at the sight of so much spilt blood.

At Ḥusayn's demise, he is so riddled with arrows that he looks like a hedgehog (*qunfudh*); his garments are soaked in blood which has stained his white beard red; even though he puts a scrap of cloth, a cap, and a turban on his bleeding skull, the blood manages to seep through.[508] Yet Ḥusayn maintains a calm confidence even as the lifeblood is draining from his body. He has known for days now that his fate is sealed and has called a curse on those who "shed my blood and the blood of my father (as) who protects the Pool from men the way that

[503] Ibid, 102.
[504] Ibid, 105.
[505] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 79.
[506] Ibid, 78.
[507] Ibid, 79.
[508] Ibid, 70ff.; 73, 79.

water is protected by camels."[509] Just before the finishing blow is dealt, "he cupped his palms together, and when they filled with his blood, he wet his face and beard with it, saying: 'Thus I will meet my Lord, wet with my blood.'"[510] While he has wept uncontrollably at the sight of his friends and family dying, he accepts his own death with serenity. An enemy soldier, gazing on the slain Imam, remarks that he has "never seen a slain victim (*qatīl*) smeared with blood more handsome than he, nor more radiant of face."[511] Yet all was not settled with Ḥusayn's death; for these *maqtal* writers, it is simply the episode around which history pivots. The consequences of Karbalāʾ would remain with the survivors from Ḥusayn's camp.

One striking story of two brothers who escaped Ibn Ziyād's soldiers involves thirst, tears, bleeding, and drowning. They encounter a woman and solicit water and a place to stay. The woman is fearful because her husband is in Ibn Ziyād's army. Nevertheless, she gives them harbor. When she brings sustenance to their hiding place they refuse it, asking instead for a prayer rug, following the model of the self-sacrificial Imam who elected piety over satiation. The younger says to the elder, "Brother, keep my company and smell my odor because I think this night will be the last night;" they then lock in a tearful embrace. In the meanwhile, the husband comes home in a foul mood; apparently Ibn Ziyād has offered him a ten thousand dirham bounty for the capture of the boys hiding in his home. His wife cautions him not to make enemies out of God and Muḥammad, but he brushes this off and demands his supper. While eating, he hears the whispers of the boys' prayers, grabs a lantern, and captures them. They make recourse to being relatives of the Prophet, but the soldier intends to claim his reward. Blood, tears, and the dialectic between water and fire drive the remainder of the story:

[509] Ibid, 53.
[510] Ibid, 74.
[511] Ibid, 75.

He called for his black servant and said to him: “Take these boys; bring them to the shore of the Euphrates and cut off their heads, and you will be free for the sake of God.”

So he took the sword and the boys. On the way, one of the boys asked the servant: “Oh black one! Your blackness resembles the blackness of Bilāl, the servant of our grandfather, the Messenger of God.” He told them: “Who are you in relation to the messenger of God?” They answered: “We are among the offspring of Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār in heaven, who is the son of the uncle of the Messenger of God.” The black servant dropped his sword from his hand and threw himself in the Euphrates. His master followed in his tracks. The servant told him: “Master, you wanted to burn me in [hell]fire by having Muḥammad (saaw) as my enemy on Judgment Day.”

His master said: “Are you disobeying me, servant?” The servant said: “Obeying God and disobeying you are more beloved to me than obeying you and disobeying God.” When the man looked at the servant and saw his state, he realized that the servant would escape. Then, he called to his son and said: “Take these two boys and cut off their heads; then you will have half the reward.” So the young man took the sword and the two boys. The boys said to him: “Young man, what will you tell the messenger of God tomorrow? What wrong did we commit that we should be killed for? What crime?” So he asked: “Who are you two?” They answered: “We are the offspring of Jaʿfar al-Ṭayyār in heaven, who is the son of the uncle of the Messenger of God.” Then the young man threw himself in the water, saying: “Oh father, you wanted to burn me in [hell]fire and make Muḥammad (saaw) my enemy! Be fearful of God, father, and let the two boys go!” The father said: “Son, are you disobeying me?” His son said: “Oh father! Obeying God and disobeying you are more beloved to me than obeying you and disobeying God.”

When the old man realized that his son had disobeyed him just as his servant had, he took the sword with his hand and said: “By God, no one will do this except me.” He took the two boys, and when they saw that, they gave up on living and said to him: “Oh Shaykh, be fearful of God in [dealing with] us! If you need to kill us, then take us to the market and we will testify that we are your slaves; you can sell us and keep the profit.” He said: “Don’t talk too much! By God, I am not killing you out of need but because of your father and the family of Muḥammad.”

The old man shook his sword and cut off the head of the older boy and threw his body in the Euphrates. Then the younger boy said: “I ask you, by God, to let me roll in my brother’s blood for an hour[512], and then you can do whatever you want.” The man said: “What good will that do you?” The boy said: “This is what I prefer.” Then the boy rolled in the blood of his brother Ibrāhīm for an hour. Then the old man said: “Get up!” but the boy did not. So he brought the sword down on the back of the boy’s neck and slew (*dhabaḥa*) him by his neck, then threw his body into the Euphrates. The first body was floating on the surface of the Euphrates, so when [the man] threw the second body in, the body of the first one met the body of his brother as it floated back, and embracing it, clinging to it as they sank in the water. The old man heard a voice coming from them in the water saying: “Our God, you have seen what this unjust person did to us. Give us our rightful due from him on Judgment Day. Then the old man put his sword in its sheath, carried the two heads and rode upon his horse until he got to ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād

[512] This is a traditional act of mourning.

> with them. When ʿUbayd Allāh saw the two heads, he grasped the old man's beard, saying: "By God, what did the two boys tell you?" He said: "O Shaykh, be fearful of God and have mercy on our youth." ʿUbayd Allāh said: "Woe to you! Why did not you have mercy on them?" The old man said: "If I had mercy on them, I would not have killed them." ʿUbayd Allāh said: "Because you did not have mercy on them, I will not have mercy on you." ʿUbayd Allāh called to a black servant he had named Nādir, saying: "Nādir! Take this old man and bring him to the place where the two youths were killed. Then cut off his head and you can have the loot [associated with it]: you will be rewarded with 10,000 dirhams of mine and gain your freedom." Nādir took the old man by the shoulders and brought him to where he had killed (*qatala*) the two boys. The old man said: "Nādir, do you have to kill me?" Nādir said: "Yes!" The old man said: "Will you not accept from me double the reward that will be given to you [if you kill me]?" Nādir said: "No!" and then he cut off the man's head and threw his corpse into the water. It rejected it and pushed the body to the shore. So ʿUbayd Allāh ordered the body burnt, and it was burnt.[513]

Blood, water, and affection usher these two righteous ones from their mortal lives to their eternal homes; fire and rejection are the perpetrator's fate. This is just one of many aftershocks that followed the slaughter on the tenth of Muḥarram. Ḥusayn's mandate to unite all Muslims under the spiritual and political ægis of those who have the Prophet's blood flowing through their veins would not be fulfilled in this age. The blood now soaked the desert ground, but this was not ordinary blood. ʿĀshūrāʾ would have cosmic consequences. The eschatological dimension of Karbalāʾ is visible as the battle rages.

This dimension is visible in the miraculous portents that accompany the slaughter of Ḥusayn and his camp. In one poignant narrative, Ḥusayn takes his infant son to the battlefield to shame his adversaries and show them the absurdity of their barbarism. Rather than grant Ḥusayn a reprieve, an enemy archer shoots the baby through the throat. Ḥusayn catches his son's blood in his hands and in anguish throws the blood up in the air; heaven catches the blood and not a drop of it hits the ground.[514] Poets declare that even Heaven and Earth burst into tears at the

[513] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 55ff.

[514] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 70.

spilling of the holy blood.[515] At Ḥusayn's death we are told that "the East and the West have wept after the people have wept in every language."[516] Various reports included in the *maqātil* testify that on the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ any pebble lifted from the ground in Syria or Jerusalem was found to have fresh blood under it.[517] When Ḥusayn finally dies, "the sky was darkened by thick black dust with a red wind, in which it was so impossible to see that people thought the torment [of Hell] had come to them."[518] Tears fall freely: the heavens "rain blood" and "the beasts of the wilderness and the fishes of the sea" weep.[519] Prophets, jinn, and angels cry uncontrollably at Ḥusayn's death. [520] Liquids are the language through which the *maqtal* writers communicate these cosmic events that transpired on the terrestrial plains of Karbalāʾ. This narration ties the cosmic to the temporal through a mundane yet cosmic theme and advances the concept of Ḥusayn as a liminal hero.

Liquid Flow in the Aftermath

Continued Shedding

Those who, like the barely conscious ʿAlī, survive the battle are carted from city to city as prisoners of war while the heads of the dead are paraded as trophies and desecrated for sport. Fluids remain an important motif in the temporal aftermath and in the heavenly response. As the remnants of Ḥusayn's family are transported from prison camp to prison camp, their humiliation endures. To symbolize this, liquids continue to vanish for the Holy Family's partisans. Almost

[515] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 12.
[516] Ibid, 141.
[517] Ibid, 121.
[518] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 75.
[519] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 40.
[520] Ibid; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 74.

ironically, when one of Ibn Ziyad's troops brings Ḥusayn's severed head to his home, he stores it under an inverted wash basin (*ijjāna*), a vessel designed to hold water.[521] Later Ibn Ziyād draws the rebuke of Anas ibn Mālik for poking at the head's mouth with a stick; Ibn Mālik recalls having seen Muḥammad's lips locked with those which Ibn Ziyād is desecrating, recalling the exchange of saliva that cemented the two together like blood brothers.[522]

In the *maqātil,* prose is interspersed with poetry, and this poetry laments the slaying of Ḥusayn in an elevated idiom. In verse, the slaying of Ḥusayn appears to be much more than just the murder of a righteous person: by killing Ḥusayn, Ibn Ziyad's forces are said to have "killed [his] father Muḥammad" and as well as the very concepts of the *shahāda* (profession of faith) and the *takbīr* (declaration of monotheism), and have "spilled the blood of the Message" (*damm al-risāla*).[523] By the time these Abbasid-era *maqātil* texts were penned, Ḥusayn's death was understood to have extra-worldly and eternal reverberations. The theme of taking in and losing fluids continues in the cosmological aftermath of Karbalāʾ, though it is eschatologically inverted—those deprived of liquid on the battlefield enjoy it in the afterlife.

Cosmic Refreshment

The *maqtal* texts portray Ḥusayn and his camp as the recipients of heavenly reward in compensation for their earthly suffering, and they often describe this reward described in terms of the *intake* of liquids. When Ḥusayn's prepubescent son ʿAlī complains on the battlefield that he is thirsty, Ḥusayn weeps but sends him back out to fight with the words, "Fight (*qātil*) a little

[521] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 127.
[522] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 76; cf. al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 51.
[523] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 154; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 7.

bit. How quickly you will meet your grandfather Muḥammad (saaw)![524] He will pour [water] for you with his cup that gives the most reliable drink (*shurba*), and you will never be thirsty again."[525] The first thing that the partisans of the Prophet's family will experience on Judgment Day is Muḥammad serving them water from the Pool (*al-ḥawḍ*) which eternally quenches their thirst, while those who have opposed *ahl al-bayt* will be sent away "thirsty" (*ʿiṭāshan*).[526] The blessing brought through Ḥusayn's sacrifice overflows even to earth and hallows the battlefield.[527] Yet while those who suffered (and continue to suffer) on behalf of the Prophet's family are infused with eschatological liquids, those who oppose the *Shīʿat ʿAlī* are to be drained of them.

Desiccated Victors

Liquids remain important as elements that figure prominently in the bestowing of reward and abundance, or conversely punishment and suffering, after Karbalāʾ. Now, however, the *maqtal* authors narrate stories wherein those who had failed to protect Ḥusayn and his supporters are tormented through the liquid exchange motif. Ḥusayn is once again involved in the drama of

[524] Muḥammad is technically ʿAlī's great-grandfather, but the *maqtal* writers often collapse the family tree so that Ḥusayn is considered to be the Prophet's son. I cover this in further depth in the next chapter.

[525] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 67.

[526] Ibid, *al-Luhūf*, 15f., Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 36. A common tradition in Twelver *maqātil* is a very close analogue to the separation of the sheep from the goats by the Matthean Jesus. In the Ḥusayn version, however, there are two crimes that the righteous must avoid. They must not abandon the Qurʾān and they must not oppose the Prophet's family. The wicked (typically non-Shīʿī Muslims) are sent away not to hellfire, but specifically to intense thirst. The righteous, on the other hand, have their thirst eternally quenched. An interesting story about heavenly thirst-quenching is recorded by Khwārizmz: "He shall give you [Fāṭima] a pen of light, and you shall sit at my pool. Before you will be boys made of light. If anyone wants to drink, including truthful people who were not Messengers, and martyrs, [or anyone] on sea or land, a lightning bolt will write for them, and the two boys will take it. Then the courtyard will be filled with light, and [the boys] will pour water for them with your permission." Here eschatological water is connected both to Fāṭima's sons and to light (*nūr*), a mark of divinity." Ibid, 245.

[527] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī describes his hometown of Ḥilla – which lies along the Euphrates opposite Karbalāʾ – as having its valleys transformed into "refreshing water" through Ḥusayn. Ḥilla may be a euphemism for the larger area. *Maqtal* writers often refer to the killing field as *al-Ṭufūf* ("the riverbanks"), as the fight did not take place in the actual town of Karbalāʾ. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 18.

liquids given and withheld, this time in the unfolding of vengeance against his killers. Ḥusayn's pre-battle prayer for vengeance includes the request that someone would "hold a cup that would quench their thirst out of their reach."[528] When one of Ibn Ziyad's soldiers jeers at Ḥusayn's parched anguish, the latter responds by asking God to make the punishment fit the crime. From then on, whenever this antagonist feels thirsty he will drink water, but it never quenches his thirst and instead causes him to vomit uncontrollably. Eventually he dies of dehydration in a moment of realized eschatology described in terms of fluids.[529] Vomit here joins the long list of discharged bodily fluids.

In the wake of the battle, the beard of one of Ḥusayn's killers spontaneously combusts, and even though he throws himself into a vat of water, the fire will not extinguish and he is reduced to ash.[530] A man named Baḥr ibn Kaʿb steals the trousers off Ḥusayn's corpse and for the rest of his life his hands are intensely dry in the summertime and drip "impudent blood" in the wintertime: liquid flows out but he never re-moisturizes.[531] Others have similar experiences. Shimr raids Ḥusayn's saddlebags and gives the perfume he finds to his daughter. When she or anyone else applies the perfume, that person contracts leprosy.[532] The man who obeys Ibn Ziyād's request to have Ḥusayn's head affixed to the front of the general's house is ridiculed in verse with the warning, "Do not buy his inkwells or you will be afflicted by al-Ḥusayn's blood in the pens."[533]

[528] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 60.
[529] Abū Mikhnaf in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 107. Realized eschatology, a term borrowed here from Christian theology, refers to the idea that divine consumation can be glimpsed in the contemporary age.
[530] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 159.
[531] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 73.
[532] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 121.
[533] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 28.

Even those who did not personally gain from Ḥusayn's death are not spared from this new reversal of liquid flow. The *maqtal* writers seem to stress that ambivalence and inaction, while not as bad as outright hostility toward the Prophet's household, are what might be termed sins of omission. Ibn Ṭāwūs records the following narrative from a man named Ibn Riyāḥ:[534]

> I saw a blind man who had witnessed (*shahida*) the killing of al-Ḥusayn (as). He was asked how he had lost his sight, and he said: I witnessed (*shahadtu*) the tenth of ten men killing him, but did not strike him or shoot at him. When he had been killed, I returned to my house and prayed my last ʿIshāʾ prayer. Then I fell asleep, and someone came to me in my dream, saying: "Answer the Messenger of God (saaw), for he is calling you." I said: What business do I have with him?" Then he seized me by the collar and dragged me to him. There was the Prophet (saaw), sitting in the desert, with his arms bare. His picked up a spear, and there was an angel standing before him with a sword of fire in his hand. He killed my nine companions, and whenever he struck one of them, their souls were engulfed in flames. I drew near to him and knelt before him, saying: "Peace be upon you, O Messenger of God!" He did not answer me and remained for a long time. Then he raised his head and said: "O enemy of God! You have violated my female relatives and killed my descendants, and you have not preserved my rights, and then you have done what you have done?" I said: "But I did not thrust a spear or shoot an arrow." He said: "You are right, but you have committed many dark deeds. Come close to me." I came close to him, and I was all covered with blood. He said: "This is the blood of my son al-Ḥusayn (as)." He lined my eyes with the blood, and since that time, I have not seen anything.

Earlier Zaydī and other pro-ʿAlid *maqātil* describe in exhausting detail the mission of vengeance which Ḥusayn's guilt-stricken partisans carry out on the supporters of Yazīd, but by the time of these late-Abbasid Twelver martyrologies, the vengeance is largely the domain of cosmic powers—justice belongs to the divine. The next chapter will use the heuristic terms *thāʾr* and *intiqām* to describe the difference between immediate revenge and revenge eschatologically delayed. Certainly for al-Khwārizmī, Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, and Ibn Ṭāwūs, vengeance is ultimately the Lord's. Ibn Ṭāwūs reports that on behalf of Fāṭima, a furious God will summon an ancient pit of Hell called Hab Hab, an inferno "which no spirit (*rūḥ*) enters, and from which no sorrow

[534] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 80f.

(*ghamm*) emerges."[535] Ḥusayn's killers will be thrown in, the fire "will seize them, and when they are in its craw, it will whine hoarsely, and they will whine hoarsely in it, and it will gasp, and they will gasp in it, and it will groan, and they will groan in it."[536] A hoarse, hot, dehydrated future is in store for those who defy the Prophet's family. Conversely, the righteous will enjoy the heavenly pool.

The above narratives and utterances center around not just the theme of liquids but also those of justice, piety, and the dominion of God. Through liquids the *maqātil* demonstrate the contrast between divine favor and divine accursedness, and in doing so they paint Ḥusayn as a liminal hero, someone straddling the loftiness of the sacred realm and the limitations of the profane one.

Scent as a Visceral Motif

Interesting, and germane, is the relationship that the suffering partisans of the Prophet's family experience around not just liquid flow but also the bittersweet olfactory sensations that accompany the apocalyptic. Like bodily fluids, scent is an earthy category that evokes memories, emotions, and bodily responses. While not as prominent as liquids, smelling is a consistent theme in late-Abbasid *maqātil*. It is a manifestation of liminality, transporting and transforming those who experience it. For example, Muḥammad recalls (in a Shīʿite tradition) that during his night journey to Jerusalem and the heavens he found himself "in the presence of one of the trees of Paradise."[537] The tree's beauty overwhelmed him, and he ate one of its delicious fruits. That

[535] Ibid, 82.
[536] Ibid.
[537] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 105.

fruit "became a sperm (*nuṭfa*) in my loins, and when I descended I lay with Khadīja, and she conceived Fāṭima." He had been overwhelmed by the beauty (vision) and flavor (taste) of Paradise, but the bridge back is olfactory: "when I miss the scent of Paradise, I smell (*shamimtu*) Fāṭima's neck." In another story, Muḥammad asks God for a resumption of sexual relations with Khadīja after the couple has grieved the deaths of their children. God sends Gabriel down to reseal the union; the angel brings a plate of dates from the Garden of Paradise. The Prophet eats one, lies with his wife, and they conceive Fāṭima. From then on, says Muḥammad, "every time I kiss Fāṭima, I smell those dates. [That smell] shall be a part of her nature until the Day of Judgment."[538] The Prophet could smell Paradise on Fāṭima; supporters of Ḥusayn are guaranteed to experience the same intoxicating scent in the hereafter.[539]

Holy people are said to have beautiful scents. Fāṭima smells her father's robe and swoons, stating, "my inheritance is this garment."[540] After the Prophet dies, his grave is said to have a "pleasant perfume;" one poet declares, "Unhappy is he / Who smells the tomb of Aḥmad / For he shall never again smell / Something so precious."[541] His grandchildren, too, are known by their scents. When they are young, they sit in his lap and he kisses and smells them.[542] When asked, "Do you love them O Messenger of God?" he responds, "Why would I not love my two blessings (*rayḥānatayya*, literally a particularly sweet-smelling kind of basil) in this world?" The pleasant scents of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are salient aspects of their being that emerge in narratives about the Holy Family.

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[538] Ibid, 111; the verb *wajada* can refer to the apprehension of something's odor, taste, sound, or texture, though in this context the odor makes the most sense.
[539] Ibid, 212.
[540] Ibid, 121.
[541] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 125; al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 124.
[542] Ibid, 149.

Karbalāʾ has Ḥusayn's scent long before the Imam actually arrives there. Upon revealing to Muḥammad that his "son al-Ḥusayn" will be killed by unrighteous people, Gabriel asks if the Prophet would like to smell the soil. The angel goes to the banks of the Euphrates and brings back a handful of earth, which Muḥammad smells. Exclaiming "this is the smell of my son al-Ḥusayn," he collapses in tears.[543] ʿAlī, too, learns of the future battle through scent: passing through Karbalāʾ, he picks up and crushes a piece of gazelle dung, then announces, "People will be killed (*yuqtalu*) in this place who will enter Heaven without measure."[544] In these stories scent is employed to transcend the liminal gaps between the temporal and the eternal, the wretched and the beautiful, the defeated and the victorious.

Smell, like bodily fluids, is a fundamental dimension of the corporeal world. The exchange of fluids is a marker of the partisans of Muḥammad's household. The fact that the Prophet sometimes gives liquids to Ḥusayn but other times receives them from him is a clue into the lofty status that Ḥusayn enjoys in the thought of these *maqtal* writers, a concept that the next chapter will address. Connected by bodily fluids, the intimate relationship between the Prophet and the martyr is brought to life: "The boy put his foot on the Prophet's foot, and he lifted him up to his chest and said to him: 'Open your mouth.' He opened his mouth, and the Prophet kissed him and said: 'O Lord! I love him, and then I love him.'"[545]

[543] Ibid, 246f. This volume repeats various versions of the story, as does al-Ḥillī. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Aḥzān*, 33.
[544] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 241. Compare Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 35 for the tradition that Jesus learned of Ḥusayn's fate through a conversation with the very gazelles whose dung ʿAlī smelt.
[545] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 153.

Conclusion

Describing the net intake and output of liquids by the righteous and the wicked, the *maqtal* writers illustrate dimensions of their conceptions of the sacred and of the profane. Cosmically gaining fluids but mortally losing them, Ḥusayn appears as both divine and human, and each to an extreme. He therefore can be characterized as a liminal figure, a being that transcends and occupies both the heavenly and earthly realms. These two are eschatologically sides of the same coin: We learn about the divine through experience of liminal humans, and Ḥusayn is the liminal figure *par excellence* in the mind of these three *maqtal* writers. Another visceral category, the olfactory, further develops the link between the cosmic and the pathetic which the martyrdom of Ḥusayn demonstrates.

As a martyr, Ḥusayn's fluids constantly flow out; as a divine hero they are eschatologically replenished. The motif of liquids therefore serves as a useful image for depicting Ḥusayn straddling both sides of the human-divine divide like a "rope extended between [God] and [God's] creatures" (*ḥablihi mamdūd baynahu wa-bayna khalqihi*).[546] While certainly not a one to one analogue to the Christian Jesus, he is depicted by the *maqtal* writers in categories used in the stories of Jesus' suffering and subsequent vindication: Chapter VI will continue the theme of Jesus-Ḥusayn parallels.

A concluding anecdote illustrates the complex dynamics between the mundane, mechanical operations of our physical world and the immense cosmic significance of profoundly universe-altering sagas as this tension is manifested in narratives about liquids. Ḥusayn has just

[546] Ibid, 99.

emerged from a public bath and is idly "scraping the henna off of his fingernails," when someone (without explanation) brings a stack of books into the chamber:

> He did not even look at them before calling for his servant to bring dye and water. He threw [the books] into it and rubbed them around. I said: "O Abū Muḥammad! Where did these books come from?" He said: "From Iraq, from people who know no shortage of falsehood, and who shall not return to the truth."[547]

This man, the "father" of the Prophet, who can divine the origins of books produced by Kūfans and other Iraqis, uses something as simple as colored bathwater to silence the very people whose failure to stand by his side will be the very silence that leads to the world being changed. Water is the mundane means by which a cosmic future is foreshadowed.

This chapter has illustrated the ways in which Ḥusayn functions as a liminal figure through the motifs of liquids and scents. Through attention to the roles that these elements play in the *maqtal* texts, we have arrived at a rich understanding of the way that Ḥusayn suffers deeply in his humanity and, at once, has a supernatural presence in the cosmos that far transcends his human life. The next chapter will explore additional dimensions of Ḥusayn's liminality, his passion, and ultimately the passionate response of God and the cosmos to this suffering hero. If, as I will demonstrate, God does indeed respond with passion, then we will have seen that the Islamic tradition has room for an understanding of God as passible. This understanding of the divine is resonant with Moltmann's doctrine of God and his *theologia crucis*. Moltmann's suffering God finds an interesting analogue in God as described in the *maqtal* texts.

[547] Ibid, 241.

Chapter VI: "That Which Hurts Fāṭima…Hurts Allāh": Divine Passibility in *Maqtal* Literature

This chapter takes two turns having to do with passibility as it relates to liminality. First, it explores the theme of Ḥusayn as a passible liminal hero; second, it shows the ways in which the *maqātil* portray cosmic entities, including God, as passible. As discussed in the introductory chapter, passibility (broadly, the ability to be moved, subjection to psychological change, susceptibility to feeling) can be understood to take many forms, including passion, suffering, temporality, deference, and partisanship. This chapter undertakes a close examination of these five aspects of passibility in order to demonstrate their presence at the nexus of the earthly and the divine—a liminal space. While Chapter V looked specifically at the theme of liquids in Ḥusayn's passion, showing how they further the depiction of him as a liminal figure, this chapter will begin with a broader examination of Ḥusayn's liminality, encompassing several different dimensions of his status as such. Recalling the discussion of Aristotelian impassibility from Chapter I it unpacks the five abovementioned dimensions of passibility, showing how each is consistent with the *logic* of Aristotle's understanding of the concept (even if some lie outside his *categorization*).

The first section of the current chapter establishes Ḥusayn as a liminal hero *par excellence* and someone who participates on both sides of the divide between the immanent / earthly and the transcendent / heavenly. As Ḥusayn is clearly subject to passion (despite the calm he displays in the moments before his own slaying), this liminal straddling has implications for heavenly passion from the standpoint of a theology from below. I explore three dimensions of Ḥusayn's liminal passibility: his liminal passibility writ large (following the expressions of these two concepts through the motif of liquids described in Chapter V), his remembered genealogy

(which transcends genetic relationships), and his often atemporal or trans-temporal nature in the *maqātil*. I also present here parallels between Ḥusayn and Jesus, himself a liminal hero.

The second section shows ways in which nonhuman, superhuman, and divine entities participate in Ḥusayn's passion; these entities include God, who in these *maqtal* accounts exhibits all five dimensions of passibility. Demonstrating these points indicates that within the Islamic tradition is a conception of God as passible, which finds analogues in Moltmann's doctrine of God. We turn first to Ḥusayn as a liminal passible *subject*, then to him as the *object* of natural and supernatural passion.

Ḥusayn's Liminality and Passibility in Late Abbasid *Maqātil*

> While the Christian concept or concepts of redemption remain fully Christian and thus non-Islamic and more specifically non-*Shīʿī* concepts, there is much that is common to the two religious traditions in this respect. Indeed, *Shīʿī* eschatology, while remaining within the Islamic framework, resembles the eschatology of post-biblical Judaism and of the early Christian church. Although the concept of redemption in *Shīʿī* piety is always presented within the context of intercession (*shafāʿah*), in actual fact it goes beyond the accepted traditional Islamic understanding of this concept.[548]

Liminality and passibility are pervasive, if implicit, conceptual undercurrents in *maqātil al-Ḥusayn.* The story of Ḥusayn's passion tells of two kinds of simultaneous collapse: the holy quest to install Ḥusayn as Imam in Kūfa collapses disastrously, and the membranes that separate realms, relations, time periods, and communities collapse into remarkable thinness. Anthropopathy—suggesting that humans and divine beings share characteristics—is more

[548] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 197.

permissible in narrative theology than in many philosophical systems.[549] The accounts of Ḥusayn's martyrdom suggest an entanglement between the suffering righteous and that which it provokes: anthropopathic heavenly mourning, anger, and tenderness. The lynchpin of this theological openness to divine passibility is the liminal hero himself, Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī. In a real sense his passion is redemptive for the community of his partisans because he straddles the seemingly unbridgeable gaps between conditioner and conditioned, immoveable and moved, infinite and infinitesimal. For this reason, exegetes have drawn attention to parallels between the passions of Ḥusayn and Jesus Christ, and importantly for this study, martyrologists hinted at the connection between the two even by the late Abbasid period.[550]

The late Abbasid period, while overlooked by many late and modern Ḥusaynologists, is important because it is then that Ḥusayn most clearly occupied a niche between base humanity and super-humanity.[551] Later *ghulāt*—Shīʿī extremists—and even mainstream Twelvers

> …went so far as to make Ḥusayn son of Fāṭimah like Jesus son of Mary in every respect. Thus Ḥusayn is depicted as raising the dead, and if he did not speak in the cradle, he praised God in the womb and later made an infant speak in order to reveal its mother's adultery. Still other *Shīʿī* extremists have gone on to declare, that, like Jesus, Ḥusayn did not die but was taken up to heaven.[552]

For these authors Ḥusayn fits the mold of the Islamic Jesus, ʿĪsā ibn Maryam. Yet this emphasis on parallels between Ḥusayn and the divine Jesus is difficult for two reasons. First, it conflates the Islamic Jesus with the Jesus of Christianity, which is literarily problematic and

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[549] For interesting treatments of anthropopathism, see Shai Held. *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 154.

[550] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 126.

[551] For purposes of this study, the category of "late-Abbasid *maqātil*" will refer roughly to the 11th-12th centuries. Ayoub's placing 17th century Safavid materials in the category of late traditions can be stretched to include everything from the early Safavid period onward, as the socio-political positioning of Twelver Shīʿism shifted drastically both during and after this era. Ibid, 127.

[552] Ibid, 35f.

ignores the particularity of the two religious traditions.[553] Second, this conflation is too intentional to be revelatory, molding Ḥusayn in the form of Jesus rather than recognizing organic theological parallels along with points of discontinuity between the two. Early *maqātil*, which focus on history to the exclusion of hagiography, do not make the theological connection, while late *maqātil*, which focus on hagiography to the exclusion of history, wrap the Ḥusayn story in theological references. The late Abbasid texts find a *via media* between history and hagiography that allows theological emphases to be drawn from the historical narrative.[554]

The question remains: why not use the earliest traditions to reconstruct a "historical Ḥusayn" whose story is disentangled from later partisan embellishments? First, this project rests not on history but on a shared communal narrative of Ḥusayn's life and death. Second, accounts from the Umayyad period are fragmentary if at all extant, and what details we do have from them are found in later accounts and thus filtered through later hermeneutics. Even Abū Mikhnaf's, perhaps the most influential *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* compiled, is available to us primarily through intermediaries. Third, and most importantly, the earliest histories of Ḥusayn are not as impartial as might be assumed. Modern scholarship has discovered that tools like the historical method and the pursuits of objective truth and unfiltered meaning cannot make historians as optimistic as they once were. As Ayoub writes,

> It must be observed that historical accounts are not totally free from hagiographical influence. Nor can it be said that hagiographical works have no historical basis. Such distinctions between genuine history and hagiography were not known to ancient writers.

[553] For the contrast between the two "Jesuses," consider even the nomenclature. Muslims refer to the Prophet Jesus as ʿĪsā, while Arab Christians prefer the name Yesūaʿ.

[554] For an example of the trend across time toward hagiographical superfluity, compare details about the reaction of Ḥusayn's horse in ibn Ṭāwūs al-Baghdādī (d. 1265) and Muḥammad Bāqir ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Najafī (d. ca. 1883), noted in Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 126. *Maqtal* writers also tended over the centuries to locate retribution for Ḥusayn's murder increasingly in the eschaton and decreasingly in the acts of human vengeance in the battle's immediate aftermath. For more on this, see the final section in this chapter.

> They wrote not as disinterested spectators, but rather as members of a community to whose history and tradition they themselves belonged.[555]

As noted in Chapter IV, *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* can be placed in four rough historical periods, each of which reflects a literary shift in the genre: late-Umayyad / early Abbasid (8th-10th centuries), late Abbasid (11th-12th centuries), Safavid (16th-18th centuries), and Modern (19th-21st centuries). Those few Western scholars who have analyzed *maqtal* material have focused largely on the first of these eras. The second is important, however, because it reflects the Ḥusaynology of the nascent Twelver Shīʿī community, and this Ḥusaynology in turn suggests an early narrative theological doctrine of God. The late Abbasid writers draw on a variety of sources, many of them quite old, but assemble them selectively in such a way that the concepts of liminality and passibility can be seen, as Heidegger might say, out of the corner of one's eye.[556] One can glimpse these theological concepts in the earlier studied motif of liquids and in this chapter through several themes that run throughout the late Abbasid texts: cosmic experience of human emotions, Ḥusayn's incarnation of biblical types, the Imam's genealogy, divine retribution for his slaying, and Shīʿa participation in his passion.

We have already seen elements of liminality in the motif of liquids as presented in Chapter V. In the coming section we will take a broader view and explore other dimensions of Ḥusayn's liminality. We will begin with two concepts—Ḥusayn's genealogy and his atemporality—that are useful in illuminating this liminality, then turn to literary parallels between him and other liminal heroes—especially the Christian Jesus. These parallels are

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[555] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 120.

[556] Zlomislić, Marko. *Jacques Derrida's Aporetic Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 113. For ways in which the curating, arrangement, and selection of reports shape Abbasid texts, see Kirsten Beck. "Iṣbahānī's Invitation to Madness: Introduction to the Majnūn Laylā Story," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

important because Jesus functions as a liminal figure *par excellence*. Establishing that the maqtal writers were conscious of this parallel—and that they used it to develop the idea of Ḥusayn as someone who straddles the gap between human and divine—strongly suggests that they viewed Ḥusayn as a liminal figure and strove to portray him as such.

Ḥusayn's Genealogy

We can see Ḥusayn's straddling of the chasm between the temporal and the eternal in the way *maqtal* writers narrate his genealogy. This mode of narration contributes to a sense that he is ontologically liminal, challenging any characterization of him as purely and simply human. While he is the biological son of Fāṭima and ʿAlī and the biological grandson of Muḥammad and Khadīja, Ḥusayn does not fit a single literary lineage very easily. At times he appears to be pre-eternal (see the next section on temporality); at other times, Muḥammad's son; at still others, Muḥammad's progenitor. Even his relationship to his older brother Ḥasan is in flux, especially when the question is raised as to who the greater of the two is. Also present in the *maqātil* is the question of ʿAlī's preeminence. Typically considered the most important Imam in Shīʿa reckoning, ʿAlī fades into the background in many *maqtal* traditions. Thus, while the reader might assume that Ḥusayn would be subservient to his grandfather, father, and older brother, in reality all three of these relationships are complicated in Ḥusayn's hagiography.

Ḥusayn is the son of the daughter of the Prophet, but often the *maqtal* writers describe him as originating from elsewhere. Sometimes he is the direct son of Muḥammad and sometimes he even precedes his grandfather, who says, "Ḥusayn is of me, and I am of Ḥusayn."[557]

[557] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 11. The practice of establishing a close relationship between someone and his or her ancestor by describing him or her as the ancestor's son or daughter is prevalent in Judaic texts but far less so in Islamic ones.

Elsewhere he says, “All mothers’ sons belong to their paternal lineage (*ʿaṣaba*), except the sons of Fāṭima, for I am their father and their paternal lineage.”[558] Elsewhere the collapsed relationship between Ḥusayn and Muḥammad is seen in a parallel to Jesus’ *paternal* descent from Abraham:

> [Saʿīd] said: If Jesus was a descendant of Abraham even though he did not have a father, but was rather the son of a daughter and was part of his lineage through a more distant [familial link], then al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are most worthy of belonging to the lineage of the Messenger of God (saas) because of their close relationship to him.[559]

Khwārizmī quotes a sheikh claiming “that the children of ʿAlī by Fāṭima are the children of the Messenger of God.”[560] This is not to say that Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are not Muḥammad’s grandsons, but in their cosmic liminality they are simultaneously his direct offspring.[561] Ḥusayn’s eventual wet nurse Umm al-Faḍl reports, “I saw in a dream, before he was born, a piece of the flesh of the Messenger of God (saas) being cut off and placed on my lap.”[562] Muḥammad responds, “If your dream is true, Fāṭima will give birth to a boy, and I will give him to you to nurse him.” The family relationships are further complicated by a statement of ʿAlī: *bi-abī anta wa-ummī yā rasūl Allāh*—"You are as father and my mother [to me], O messenger of God.” [563] This is an interesting grammatical construction which could indicate that he considers Muḥammad to be his father and his mother (though he was biologically neither). In short, the members of *ahl al-kisāʾ* (Muḥammad, Fāṭima, ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, who gathered under the

[558] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 18, 137.
[559] Ibid, 139.
[560] Ibid, 138.
[561] Cf. Ibid, 12; 80.
[562] Ibid, 31.
[563] Ibid, 33; ʿAlī’s line here could also be an allusion to a common fealty oath. For the above translation, compare Šelomo D. Goyṭayn. *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 378.

Prophet's cloak (*kisāʾ*) in a tradition that Shīʿites consider to validate the unique status of these five) are closely related to each other, and these relations are fluid.

Ḥusayn's rank relative to both his father ʿAlī and his older brother Ḥasan interests the compilers of these narratives; the fluidity of this ranking reflects his liminality. While Shīʿism generally ascribes to ʿAlī an elevated status second only to the Prophet, the *maqtal* writers downplay this in favor of laud for Ḥusayn. Khwārizmī records ʿAlī as saying, "Al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn did not call me 'father.'[564] Even after the Messenger of God (saas) died, they used to call the Messenger of God 'father.' Al-Ḥasan used to call me 'Abū al-Ḥusayn,' and al-Ḥusayn used to call me 'Abū al-Ḥasan.'"[565] Elsewhere Khwārizmī refers to ʿAlī's son as "al-Ḥusayn ibn Fāṭima," suggesting that the mother is the primary parent.[566] Ḥasan's and Ḥusayn's direct biological lineage to Muḥammad via Fāṭima rather than via ʿAlī likely explains their often seeming to be of a higher station than their father. This is not to say that ʿAlī is not held in very high regard himself, but he does not share Ḥusayn's vaunted cosmic properties in these specific *maqātil*.[567]

Ḥusayn's rank relative to his older brother may be less significant than the former's stature as compared to his father or grandfather; nevertheless, it is significant that the *maqtal* writers devote considerable space to comparing Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. Sometimes Ḥasan is preferred: in one light moment, Abū Bakr picks up the older boy and declares, "he is similar to the Prophet; he is not similar to ʿAlī," prompting ʿAlī to chuckle.[568] Elsewhere Fāṭima refers to

[564] Consider, for example, the quasi divinity that *ghulāt* sects like the Alevis and the Alawites ascribe to ʿAlī.
[565] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 160.
[566] Ibid, 236.
[567] For a contrast, consider the elevated position of ʿAlī in the Alevi and Alawite traditions, as well as in contemporary "normative" Shī'ism.
[568] Ibid,142f.

her two boys as "these two Ḥasans" (a play on the shared triliteral root in their names).[569] Their equality is often affirmed during moments of playful competition. Narratives often depict the sons of ʿAlī and Fāṭima playing together, which tends to amuse their onlookers. A favorite activity of theirs is to ride on the shoulders or backs of adults. The Prophet once says of himself and his two riders, "Yes, this camel is your camel, and you two are its balanced load."[570] Fāṭima sometimes feigns jealousy that her father would prefer one boy over the other, prompting him to reassure her that he cherishes them equally.[571] In one instance he seems to take a side when the two boys are wrestling: "The Messenger of God was saying: 'Go, Ḥasan! Get Ḥusayn!' Fāṭima said: 'Are you instigating the bigger one against the smaller one?' The Prophet said: Gabriel is saying: 'Go Ḥusayn! Get Ḥasan!' And neither of them pinned the other."[572] Even eschatologically the two are sometimes depicted as equals, adorning the two sides of the Throne of God like earrings on the Day of Judgment—with neither being named as the righthand brother.[573]

For his part, Ḥusayn is deferential to his older brother. In one story Ḥasan donates a sum of 130,000 dirhams in alms; Ḥusayn in turn donates 120,000 with the humble admission, "I am not as generous as my brother."[574] Even during disputes Ḥusayn defers to his brother. During a disagreement between them people ask Ḥusayn to initiate the reconciliation. He responds that Ḥasan, "is older than I am. The Messenger of God (saas) said: 'When two people have a disagreement, the one who should initiate the reconciliation is the one whose status (*daraja*) is

[569] Ibid, 149.
[570] Ibid, 156 for Muḥammad declaring that while these two riders may be equal, ʿAlī is "even better than they are."
[571] Cf. ibid, 155f.
[572] Ibid, 157.
[573] Ibid, 161.
[574] Ibid, 91.

higher than the other's status.' I do not want (*uḥibbu*) my status to be higher than my brother's status."[575]

Still, ultimately the *maqtal* writers side with the notion of Ḥusayn's preeminence. Ayoub notes that Ḥusayn is considered the Master of the Youths of Paradise (*sayyid shabāb ahl al-janna*), the Wronged Martyr (*al-shahīd al-maẓlūm*), and in some sense both the Muslim community's redeemer and intercessor—all by virtue of his slaying at Karbalāʾ.[576] Returning to stories of the boys riding on the backs of others, Ḥasan once says of his steed Muḥammad, "The best inhabitant of earth carried me;" Ḥusayn responds by noting that he was being carried by Gabriel: "The best inhabitant of Heaven carried me."[577] Indeed, while Fāṭima's two sons could jest playfully on earth, it is in Heaven that Ḥusayn's lofty status is most fully realized. His genealogy is not linear; while some narratives emphasize his familial position (as in his subordination to his older brother and his literal status as the child of ʿAlī and Fāṭima), others suggest that he transcends the linearity of generations and is positioned as ascending above the realm of human life. *Maqtal* writers choose to include both types of narratives alongside each other, thus depicting a complex picture of Ḥusayn's liminal status.

Collapsed Temporality

While he is unquestionably a human being with historically verifiable birth and death dates, Ḥusayn is in another sense atemporal. This is seen in his preeternality, his continued and active life beyond death, and his immediate presence to the (in this case, 12th-13th century) Twelver community. The *maqtal* writers attest to each of the three. Ibn Masʿūd reports the

[575] Ibid, 220.
[576] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 9f.; cf. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 11; 80.
[577] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 38f.

Prophet as saying that when God "wished to bring His creation into being, He…split open the light of Ḥusayn and from it He made the tablet (*lawḥ*) and the pen (*qalam*), and Ḥusayn is more exalted than the tablet and the pen."[578] Ayoub observes "that Ḥusayn is linked in this creation myth with the two items of destiny and revelation…In a very direct and special way, Ḥusayn is connected with the history of creation and of mankind…Human history revolves around him."[579] Fāṭima appears to the newly created Adam and Eve in the garden wearing a crown (ʿAlī) and two earrings (Ḥasan and Ḥusayn).[580] God proceeds to tell the primordial couple that the Holy Family preexists them, "two thousand years before I created you." As Ḥusayn is preeternal, so does he forever participate in drama of salvation. He is "one of the gates of Paradise," his name is inscribed on the right side of God's Throne (where Muḥammad's name traditionally is), and al-Ḥillī testifies that, "Al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī is even greater (*aʿẓam*) in the Heavens than he is on Earth."[581] These narrators make it clear that Ḥusayn exists outside of time just as he lived within it for some five decades. Equally important is his continued presence to the community of his devotees.

Most of Ḥusayn's pro-ʿAlid contemporaries ultimately were unwilling or unable to come to his earthly defense and to support his bid to be recognized as Caliph in Kūfa. In the centuries after his death, the proto-Shīʿites wondered how they might participate in Ḥusayn's passion where their ancestors had failed to act. Rituals like reenactments, processions, and the recitation of elegies developed, and by the Abbasid era, a theology of liminal connection to the martyred

[578] Ibn Masʿūd in Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 29.
[579] Ibid.
[580] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 107.
[581] Ibid, 212; Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 11.

Imam joined with and undergirded these rituals.[582] Khwārizmī reports that the Prophet made direct reference to a chain of connections that straddle the eons: "On the Day of Judgment, I shall take hold of God's belt knot (*ḥijza*), and you, O ʿAlī, shall take hold of my belt knot. Your children shall take hold of your belt knot, and the partisans (*shīʿa*) of your children shall take hold of their belt knots."[583] By participating in the community of partisanship believers have access to God. The converse is also true, as Muḥammad warns: "The People of my House (*ahl baytī*) are like Noah's ark. Whoever rides on it is safe, and whoever lags behind it drowns, and if someone fights against us at the end of time, it is as if he is fighting for the Antichrist."[584] Elsewhere the Messenger echoes New Testament themes: "O ʿAlī! You and I have been created from a tree. I am its root, you are its branch, and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are its twigs. He who attaches himself to one of its twigs God grants entry into Paradise."[585] The message underlying these and many other images is that in order to be linked to heaven one must be linked to its liminal appendages, the Household of the Prophet. Through his slaying Ḥusayn links his entire family to the divine.

For his part, Ḥusayn is the most exemplary Shīʿite; participation in his piety is redemptive. The tenth Imam, ʿAlī al-Hādī, reported exclaimed, "Peace be upon you, O son of Fāṭima al-Zahrāʾ. I bear witness that you have performed prayer and given alms, enjoined virtue and prevented vice, and striven in the path of God."[586] This list of behaviors is taken directly from the ten Ancillaries of the Faith (*furūʿ al-dīn*) in Twelver Shīʿism. All three late Abbasid

[582] For the specific practice of professional mourning, compare Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī with David Pinault's work on these rituals. "Shia Lamentation Rituals and Reinterpretations of the Doctrine of Intercession: Two Cases from Modern India," in *History of Religions*, vol. 38 no. 3 (1999), 285ff. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 125.
[583] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 159.
[584] Ibid, 157.
[585] Ibid, 162.
[586] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 13.

martyrologists suggest something morphologically similar to the theology of the Christ hymn in Philippians 2. Al-Ḥillī writes that God, "compensated al-Ḥusayn (as) for his killing (*qatl*) by making the Imamate of his progeny" while Paul in Philippians concludes that because of Jesus' submission to crucifixion, "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord."[587] Ibn Ṭāwūs extends quasi-kenotic imagery to the Shīʿa community: God "granted them success in being adorned with the most perfect (*kamāl*) deeds, until their souls were empty of everything except Him, and their spirits knew the honor of his contentment."[588] Khwārizmī suggests that adopting a posture of sorrow one can share in both Ḥusayn's suffering and in his redemption:

> Because I [al-Khwārizmī] am living in too late an era to fight beside [al-Ḥusayn], to shed my blood [in the fight for his cause] and to stand in his presence, I wanted to compile [an account of] his slaying (*maqtal*) with the flourishes of my pen, to do battle on his behalf and on behalf of his descendants with my tongue, since I did not do battle on their behalf with the sword… Avert your eyes, so that Fāṭima bint Muḥammad may pass through the courtyards of Resurrection, wrapped in a garment watered by the blood of al-Ḥusayn, so that she may hold the leg of the Throne…Then she will say: "Ask for my intercession on behalf of those who have wept on account of my affliction," for God Almighty will have her intercede on their behalf.[589]

Ḥusayn's quest for justice, and his willingness to suffer for it, thus extends to the community of his partisans across time and space. Just as Ḥusayn is present before and in creation and will endure—forever decapitated—attending to the Throne of God, so too is he accessible to the

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[587] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 12; Php 2:9ff. NRSV.

[588] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 5.

[589] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 19. Al-Ḥillī similarly suggests that weeping for Ḥusayn is a way of sharing in his passion: "May God have mercy on our partisans (*shīʿa*). By God! Our partisans (*shīʿa*) are the believers. By God! They have participated with us in the calamity, by their long-lasting sadness (*ḥuzn*) and sorrow." Elsewhere al-Ḥillī appears to link the lament of the partisans on the battlefield with that of the later community. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 120, 104.

Shīʿa through devotion and remembrance.[590] Ḥusayn serves as an intercessor who has the capacity to draw Shīʿa in later generations close to him, and through him to paradise, in a move that transcends mundane experiences of linear time. His passibility is seen too in parallels between his story and the biblical narrative of passible liminal heroes.

Biblical Typologies

The late Abbasid tradition of *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* also draws intertextual connections to biblical images and typologies in ascribing theological meaning to Ḥusayn's passion. One can read the *maqātil* and find biblical analogues in the roles that passible liminal heroes play in the corresponding narrative traditions. For example, there may be subtle references to another righteous hero betrayed by his kinsfolk, Joseph son of Jacob. Fāṭima appears on the Day of Judgment with a blood-stained garment, perhaps a reference to Joseph's brothers presenting his multi-colored coat to their father. As Joseph's father Jacob gave blessings to his twin sons Ephraim and Manasseh (perhaps an inversion of the imbalanced blessings given to Jacob and his twin brother Esau), so too does Fāṭima's father Muḥammad bless her two sons: "Ḥasan shall have my prestige and sovereignty, and Ḥusayn shall have my courage and generosity."[591] These similarities might be incidental, but Khwārizmī does make explicit a link between Ḥusayn and Joseph: "Al-Ḥusayn has been given such virtue as has not been given to any of the descendants of Adam, except Joseph the son of Jacob the son of Isaac the son of Abraham, the friend of [God] the Merciful."[592]

[590] On this and many points, Ayoub sees morphological similarities to the crucified Christ. The concluding chapter will address the relationship between hereditary and morphological relations; here it should suffice to notice the latter.

[591] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 158.

[592] Ibid, 216.

In addition to Joseph, the *maqtal* writers draw on a parallel between Ḥusayn and the prototypical victim of fratricide in the Hebrew bible, Abel. Al-Ḥillī recounts, "The same thing will befall your son al-Ḥusayn ibn Fāṭima which befell Abel at the hands of Cain. He will be given the same reward as Abel, and his killer will bear the same burden as Cain."[593] Abel, like Joseph, enjoys God's favor but suffers the persecution of the powerful. He therefore stands as a passible liminal hero, and the *maqtal* texts understand the parallel between him and Ḥusayn.

Parallels also exist between the slaughter of Ḥusayn and that of John the Baptist. Perhaps because normative (Twelver) Islam has long been uncomfortable with the historicity of Jesus' crucifixion, hagiographers turned to John to ground Ḥusayn's martyrdom typologically. Al-Ḥillī notes specific parallels between Ḥusayn and the Islamic Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā.[594] The twentieth century commentator Rashīd al-Dīn ibn Sharāshūb cites the twelfth Imam noticing a John-Ḥusayn parallel: both were six months in the womb, both were persecuted for their calls to piety and justice, and both of their "fathers" (Zechariah and Muḥammad) suffered unfathomable grief at the prospect of their sons' slayings.[595] Ayoub notes that John's "whole life was a protest against human folly and the love of material possessions. Although he was martyred, he continued to the end to reproach the wicked king for his evil deeds."[596]

There may also be a reference to Abraham's intended sacrifice, who was understood by the late Abbasid era to be Ishmael: "he will be unjustly slaughtered (*yudhbaḥu*) the way a ram is slaughtered (*yudhbaḥu*)."[597] Though it may be an overstep here to see explicit reference to Ishmael and the ritual sacrifices of Eid, there is no doubt that the motif of a sacrificial sheep is

[593] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 32.
[594] Ibid, 31.
[595] Ibn Sharāshūb 235f., op. cit. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 36 (bib. on 290).
[596] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 36.
[597] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 40.

shared between the biblical witness and the *maqtal* texts. This suggests, once again, that the suffering of the innocent is a mark of their solidarity with the divine, that God cares *for* and *with* those sacrificed for righteousness sake. Karbalāʾ, like Mount Moriah and Golgotha, is a place where divine pathos is clearly felt.[598]

The Motif of Liquids in the Jesus Passion Narrative

The biblical parallel that is both most developed and most explicit is that between the Shīʿite narrative of Ḥusayn (and Fāṭima) and the Christian narration of Jesus (and Mary). In this section and the next I explore this parallel, first (recalling Chapter V) presenting the motif of liquid inflow and output in the two passion narratives, and second explicating specific correlations that the *maqtal* writers see between Jesus and Ḥusayn, and between Mary and Fāṭima. In one instance an angel descends to Earth with a message for Muḥammad: "O angel! Tell Muḥammad that a man of his people called Yazīd will kill the pure one, the son of the pure one who is the counterpart of the Virgin Mary."[599] A narration relates that during the night journey Muḥammad was offered two choices: God could spare the lives of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, or the two could intercede for him on the Day of Judgment.[600] With tears in his eyes, Muḥammad elects their intercession—it is through martyrdom that they are elevated to a status in which *they* intercede for *Muḥammad*. Christic overtones are present in the theme of redeeming sacrifice, and it is only fitting that this decisive moment involves the shedding of bodily fluids.[601]

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[598] Cf. Gen 22; Rev 5.

[599] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 238.

[600] Ibid, 246: "The Messenger of God wept (*bakā*). God said: 'O Muḥammad! Why do you weep (*tabkī*)? Your tears (*dumūʿ*) are priceless to me. If you would be happier to keep them with you but not to have intercession on the Day of Judgment, We will make it so.' The Messenger of God said: 'Intercession is dearer (*aḥabb*) to me, O Lord, even if the apples of my eye are killed (*qutilat*) while Fāṭima is alive.'"

[601] These Christic overtones are present in Ḥusayn's innocent suffering and the redemptive function that it plays.

The theme of liquids going into or coming out of the body, discussed at length in Chapter V, is unmistakably present in both the Christian passion of Christ and the *maqtal* passion of Ḥusayn. Jesus declares at the Last Supper, "I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mt. 26:29); he pronounces that wine to be his blood "poured out" for the disciples (Lk 22:20). During his final night spent in prayer, according to a late addition to Luke's account, "his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Lk 22:44). When women following the execution party wail at Jesus' plight, he responds "daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me" (Lk 22:27), a command that hich Ḥusayn gives to the women of his camp repeatedly in the *maqtal* accounts. In Matthew's passion Jesus is twice offered drinks on the cross: once wine "mingled with gall" (Mt 27:34) and once a sponge soaked in "vinegar" (Mt 27:48) but both times he does not drink. John's Jesus complains of thirst just before death (Jn 21:28); just after he dies soldiers pierce his side with a spear, "and at once there came out blood and water" (Jn 21:34). Blood, sweat, and tears feature prominently in Christ's passion, as does thirst. While correlation does not imply causation, it is not insignificant that a net outflow of bodily fluids characterizes both Ḥusayn and Jesus and that for both this outflow hints at human frailty, vulnerability, and suffering.

Liquids into and out of a body as a sign of health, prosperity, or blessing is a motif not unique to the stories of Ḥusayn and Jesus.[602] It is a not a uniquely Twelver instinct to associate the spectrum of life and death with the presence or absence of bodily fluids; water is, after all, the building block of life. Still, in some significant ways, the *maqtal* writers patterned the passion

[602] The Gospels connect Jesus with water, wine, perfume, oil, blood, sweat, tears, and the fruit of the sea, often in either miraculous or emotive narratives.

of Ḥusayn on the (Christian version of) the passion of Christ. Fāṭima's son and Mary's son both died bloody and thirsty, and the late-Abbasid proto-Twelvers dwelt on this shared connection.

Parallels between Ḥusayn-Fāṭima and Jesus-Mary

Jesus' passion is by no means unique in premodern dramas in which a liminal hero suffers an unjust death. From this vantage point, comparisons between Ḥusayn and Jesus might seem to be attributed to a lurking variable that drives both stories. However, convincing evidence exists that the *maqtal* writers were inspired by and drew upon the Christian Christ narrative. Furthermore, even if specific parallels are incidental they still serve as points of typological contact between the two narratives.[603] From birth to death—and especially in their final days—these two liminal heroes undergo similar experiences of passion and are surrounded by similar characters, including proxies, betrayers, converts, and mothers who function themselves as liminal heroes. These mothers are remarkably and explicitly similar in their liminality.[604]

The *maqtal* writers consider Fāṭima to be integral to salvation history. They sometimes see Fāṭima and Mary as on par with each other, while at other times they even portray Fāṭima as being more transcendent and meaningful to salvation history than Mary. They record the Prophet as saying (possibly with a mind toward John 15 or Romans 11), "I am a tree, Fāṭima is its branch, ʿAlī is its pollen, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are its fruits, and our partisans (*shīʿa*) are its leaves. Its roots are in the Garden of Eden, and the root, the branch, the pollen, the fruits, and the

[603] Even if the *maqtal* writers did not intend / recognize these similarities, this is a meaning that could be formed through the reader's contact with the texts or the texts' contact with Christianity.

[604] For a survey of this theme, cf. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 35f.

leaves are in Paradise."[605] Al-Khwārizmī goes so far as to compare Mary and Fāṭima and extol the latter in light of the former:

> [T]he Messenger of God (saas) was taken to the Fourth Heaven, which is made of a yellow gold called *māhūn* and guarded at night by a believer, and in it is the Prophet Idrīs. [Ibn Abbas] mentioned the story of Mary and her castle, and Āsyā bint Muzāḥim and her castle, and Khadīja bint Khuwaylid and her castle, until he reached Fāṭima, daughter of the Messenger of God (saas), and he mentioned her castle.[606]

Indeed, Khwārizmī makes explicit the connection between Mary and Fāṭima. Speaking of his daughter, Muḥammad is recorded as saying, "Praise be to God who did not let me die (*yumit*) before blessing me with progeny like this, like Mary. Every time that he entered [her] chamber to see her, He found her supplied with sustenance. He said: 'O Mary! Whence [comes] this to you?'"[607] Elsewhere, Khwārizmī makes the connection even more explicit: Muḥammad declares, "The first person to enter Paradise on account of me is Fāṭima, because she is for this people (*umma*) what Mary the daughter of ʿImrān was for the Israelites."[608] In fact, Fāṭima is ontologically superior to Mary: that the former typologically precedes the latter is seen in Mary's miraculously visiting and nursing Ḥusayn's frail mother in her illness.[609] Further, while Mary is specific to Israel's salvation history, Fāṭima is universal:

> [Fāṭima] said: "I am in pain, and it is making it worse that I do not have food to eat." He said: "My daughter, are you not content that you are the Mistress of the Women of the Worlds?" She said: "My father, but what of Mary, the daughter of ʿImrān?" He said: "she is the mistress of the women of her world, and you are the Mistress of the Women of the

[605] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn,* 102; elsewhere an analogy is made between Fāṭima and the Morning Star, again a possible parallel with New Testament imagery: "He was asked: 'O Messenger of God! What is the sun? And what is the moon? And what is Venus? And what are the two bright stars of Ursa Minor?' He said: 'I am the sun, the moon is ʿAlī, Venus is Fāṭima, and the two bright stars of Ursa Minor are al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.'" Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn,* 164.

[606] Ibid, 114.

[607] Ibid, 119.

[608] Ibid, 120; cf. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering,* 18.

[609] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering,* 51.

> Worlds, for, by God, I have married you to a master (*sayyidan*) in this life and the next."[610]

The *maqtal* writers consider Mary and Jesus to be typologically related to Fāṭima and Ḥusayn, with the latter pair the fulfilment of the former. As ancestor to eleven of the twelve Imams, Fāṭima is the progenitor of the "true divine Logos which preceded all creation; through them, and for their sake, all things were made."[611] Like Mary's, a sword is to pierce her soul, as her children and the later Imams are known for being killed in an untimely manner.[612]

Fāṭima acts as intercessor for those who call to her; she possesses a measure of divine favor unmatched by any women of the world.[613] In a passage reminiscent of the Lucan *Ave Maria*, we read about a hitherto unknown angel:

> This is an angel that has never descended to Earth before tonight. He asked his Lord permission to convey greetings to me and to give me good tidings that Fāṭima is the mistress of the womenfolk of Paradise, and that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the masters of the young people of Paradise.[614]

This passage is particularly striking: the root of the term for delivering good tidings, *b-sh-r*, is the same as used for the angelic greeting in Arabic translations of Luke 2:10.[615] Here and elsewhere Christ's nativity is a useful paradigm for the *maqtal* writers. This connection imbues the *maqtal* texts with the power of an established narrative, the Christ story.

Christic imagery is not confined to descriptions of Ḥusayn. In a passage reminiscent of Matthew 25, a Bedouin declares of Muḥammad, "I came to him hungry, and he fed me, I came to

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[610] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 123f.

[611] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 216.

[612] Cf. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 162; for a counterexample of Fāṭima being *spared* the pain of knowing that her second son is to be slaughtered unjustly, cf. al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 136.

[613] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 90f.

[614] Ibid, 125.

[615] The clause in the New Arabic Version of the Lucan text is, *ana ubashiukum bi-faraḥin ʿaẓīmin*, "I bring good tidings of joy to you."

him without clothing, and he clothed me. I came to him on foot, and he gave me a ride."[616] The Prophet occasionally plays the part of Jesus relative to Fāṭima / Mary because unlike Mary, Fāṭima predeceases her son. Her soul is thus pierced by a two-pointed sword: heavenly experience of Ḥusayn's slaughter and earthly experience of her own father's death.

The relationship that *maqtal* writers see between Ḥusayn and Jesus is equally powerful: Jesus functions as a redeemer in the Christian community, and though while not quite analogous, Ayoub thinks that Ḥusayn functions as the redeemer of the Shīʿa community. He notes a parallel between the Ḥusayn story and the New Testament narrative: "A white dove entered Fāṭima's garment at the house of Umm Salamah before her meeting with the Prophet, perhaps echoing a later event in the life of Christ: the appearance of the dove at his baptism."[617] Still, the most salient biblical parallel to the Ḥusayn story is Jesus' crucifixion. The drama of Ḥusayn's last days echoes many details of Christ's New Testament passion. A former companion of the Prophet's household, Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan, betrays Ḥusayn and assumes the Judas-like role of archenemy to the cause of righteousness and even feels ashamed of his behavior.[618] In a rather elaborated tradition, soldiers divide Ḥusayn's clothing among themselves just as other soldiers had done with Jesus' more meager garments (though in the Ḥusayn story an additional detail is included—those who attempt to wear the stolen clothes become afflicted in whatever body part the garments are covering).[619] Reminiscent of Simon of Cyrene bearing Jesus' cross, a companion of Ḥusayn's named Saʿīd al-Ḥanafī takes his place (to a grisly end) on the banks of Karbalāʾ.[620] The Roman centurion, too, has two parallels in the Ḥusayn story: at Shimr's urging,

[616] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 119.
[617] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 72.
[618] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf*, 72, 75.
[619] Ibid, 73ff.; Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 118.
[620] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 115.

a soldier named Khūlī ibn Yazīd al-Aṣbaḥī approaches the mortally wounded Ḥusayn to decapitate him, only to fall back fearfully in refusal.[621] Even more significantly is the drama, discussed in a Chapter IV, of al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Tamīmī. Ḥurr, Ibn Ziyad's general, has a crisis of conscience, is persuaded of Ḥusayn's righteousness, and defects to the ʿAlid camp (whence he ultimately dies in the battle).

Feeling intense thirst in his final moments, Ḥusayn is presented with an unappealing option for assuaging it; at this point the Imam hints at Jesus' anticipation of heavenly wine:

> I shall not return to the garrison, and I shall not drink of its hot water. Rather, I shall return to my grandfather the Messenger of God (saas), and I shall abide with him in the abode of truth with a mighty servant, and I shall drink of water that is free from impurities.[622]

Just as Jesus had access to legions of angels standing at the ready, so too did Ḥusayn have the ability to summon angelic warriors to overwhelm the Umayyad forces: "hosts of angels, with swords of fire in their hands, filled the entire space between heaven and earth, ready to obey Ḥusayn's command."[623] Ḥusayn declines this supernatural assistance: "Were it not for the proximity of things and the coming down of the decree of the end, I would have fought them with these [angels]."[624] Unlike in the biblical narrative, the liminal hero in the *maqtal* texts survives long enough to require an accelerated death; Shimr commands his troops to "put him out of his misery."[625] They do this in dramatic, grotesque fashion. Again paralleling the New Testament drama, at Ḥusayn's death heavenly portents manifest in ways similar to those

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[621] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 74; for a parallel with Simon Peter drawing his sword to defend Jesus, consider an incidence in which a Bedouin threatens Muḥammad and one of the Prophet's companions leaps to his aid: "'ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb sprang toward him to attack him, and the Prophet (saas) said to him: 'Sit down, O Abū Ḥafṣ, for the mild-tempered man is almost a prophet.'" Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn,* 115.

[622] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* Slaying/75f.

[623] Ayoub 123, from Darbandī.

[624] Ṭabarī, *Dalāʾil,* 74 in Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering,* 123.

[625] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering,* 119; cf. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 74.

recorded in the Matthean crucifixion story: “At that time there the sky was darkened by thick black dust with a red wind, in which it was so impossible to see that people thought the torment [of Hell] had come to them. The people remained that way for an hour.”[626]

Ḥusayn’s head functioned as a relic of particular significance in medieval Shīʿism just as the cross of Jesus did in medieval Christianity—miracles surrounding the head were widely reported. Many mosques claim to be the place of his head’s final interment—just as many churches historically have claimed pieces of the True Cross as their central artifact—and to this day the supposed sites of the head’s burial in Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan, and Lebanon (far from the body’s burial place in Iraq) remain popular destinations for Shīʿa pilgrims.[627] I contend that the parallels between the banks of Karbalāʾ and the heights of Golgotha are more than coincidental—in the Christian Christ the compilers of *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* found a profound correlate to their slain Imam. In fact, these compilers suggest that Fāṭima and Ḥusayn transcend even the greatness of their Christian analogues. In this comparison they establish Ḥusayn as a passible liminal hero.

Here we have seen that the ways in which *maqtal* writers of the late Abbasid period portray Ḥusayn's genealogy and temporality, and the parallels to Jesus' passion that they build up, all contribute to the texts being imbued with the sense of Ḥusayn as a figure with a special liminal status. Drawing on the power of the compelling biblical narrative tradition imbues the *maqātil* texts with heightened emotive power. In the next section, we turn to the ways in which the world, the cosmos, and other beings respond to Ḥusayn's passion. These extraordinary responses show the natural and supernatural worlds to be passible in perhaps unexpected ways,

[626] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 75.
[627] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering,* 132f.; cf. Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 74.

uniquely so in their grief for Ḥusayn. Such powerful stories contribute to the idea that those who straddle earth and heaven reflect both realms, and that their passionate responses to earthly events echo cosmically.

Cosmic Passibility

Ḥusayn joins much of non-human creation, from the mundane to the supernatural, in straddling the divide between temporal and eternal. His martyrologists contend that his slaying reverberates through the cosmic realms. Beings from the non-sentient to the supernatural were, and forever remain, subject to human passions in his death event. From dirt and rocks to jinn and angels, and even to prophets, Imams, the cosmos, and God, the entire realm of existence quakes at Ḥusayn's passion. The *maqtal* authors seem to envision each of these subjects as not only moveable but also moved; the death of Ḥusayn causes natural and supernatural nonhumans to suffer (and longsuffer) human passions. Especially in the late Abbasid memories, existants from the most basic to the most lofty must bend under the weight of the unthinkable, the idea that God's chosen Imam, faced with long odds on the battlefield and in the political arena, could lose his divinely ordained spiritual-political status in this world. This section will look first at natural entities' anticipation of and response to Ḥusayn's passion. It will then discuss the responses of liminal heroes such as prophets and Imams, especially Muḥammad. It turns next to the grief of angels and jinn, then to the sorrow felt by the cosmos as a whole. Finally I turn to the specific case of God's passibility in light of Ḥusayn's slaying, showing that God joins these other sets of entities in being affected by the temporal event of ʿĀshūrāʾ.

Natural Entities

As Chapter V has shown, the motif of spontaneous bleeding has demonstrated that not even inanimate objects like trees, rocks, and dung are immune to grief when confronted by the possibility of Ḥusayn's slaughter. The natural realm grieves both in anticipation of and reaction to the martyrdom. These heavenly portents reflect a collective divine sigh at the tragedy of Karbalāʾ, a rippling of cosmic passibility into even the most mundane of entities. Dirt, which had long foreseen that Karbalāʾ would turn into a holy battleground, is often saturated with sentient blood in a recapitulation of the Abel story.[628] The scent of crushed gazelle dung found at the site of the future battle smells of death.[629] Upturned stones drip with blood. Even the spoils of war play a role in signifying cosmic disgust with the battle's outcome. Al-Ḥillī notes this in three places.[630] First, the meat from the vanquished party's slaughtered camels is inedible because it was rendered "bitterer than aloe," and other meat which the victors tried to eat "became fire" when placed in a cauldron. Second, the dyestuffs and perfume were reduced to ash when confiscated from Ḥusayn's saddlebags, and one woman who managed to apply some perfume "became afflicted with leprosy." Third, jewelry among the war booty turned into either copper or fire. In each case the very mundane is imbued with cosmic significance through a supernatural transition. Though the non-sentient objects do not necessarily assume anthropomorphic passions—weeping, yelling, dying—they do participate in the larger cosmic passibility.

Other unlikely victims of Ḥusayn's slaying share in his fate. Even if metaphorical, the "deaths" of Muḥammad, the Qurʾān, and the *sunnah* show the negative reverberations of the

[628] Cf. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 237f.
[629] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 241; Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 238.
[630] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 121.

ʿĀshūrāʾ event.[631] The *maqātil* writers go as far as to cite poetry that claims that Yazīd's forces did not just kill Ḥusayn but also the *takbīr* ("God is greatest") and the *shahāda* ("there is no god but God; Muḥammad is God's messenger; ʿAlī is God's vicegerent").[632] The Earth itself acquires agency and mood in the presence of the Holy Family. At the end of Fāṭima's life the earth glows with affection for her, then opens up a space for her grave.[633] After ʿAlī commends his wife's remains to the Earth, the latter responds: "I shall be even more of a companion to her than you. Go back and do not worry."[634] At Ḥusayn's slaying the Earth suffers in holy anguish in ways that recall the cataclysmic aftermath at Golgotha. Long before Karbalāʾ the soil on the banks of the Euphrates becomes red and smells of blood.[635] Portents accompanying his death include the eclipsing of the sun and the collision of stars.[636] In various ways the *maqtal* writers ascribe passible agency to the usually inanimate, and this realm uses its newfound agency to groan and mark Ḥusayn's unjust slaying.

Animals, too, are anthropomorphized as they anticipate and experience Ḥusayn's passion. Jesus, passing through Karbalāʾ, encounters a lion who declares, "Here will be killed the descendant (*sibṭ*) of Aḥmad [Muḥammad] and I will not let you pass until you curse his murderers."[637] The lion further informs Jesus that the murderer will be "the accursed of the inhabitants of heavens and earth, of the beasts of the fields and the fish of the sea, he is Yazīd."

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[631] Jaʿfar al-Qummī reports, citing Ḥusayn's grandson Muḥammad al-Bāqir, something similar about earlier prophets. At the deaths of Ḥusayn, ʿAlī, Aaron (Hārūn), Joshua (Yūshuʿ), Peter (Shamʿūn al-Ṣafā), as well as at the ascension of Jesus (ʿĪsā), every upturned rock revealed congealed blood. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 35.

[632] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 158; the poem that makes this assertion continues: "It was as if they had killed / Your father Muḥammad."

[633] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 131f.

[634] Ibid, 132.

[635] Ibid, 232.

[636] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 130.

[637] Ibid, 35.

At other times, animals also bring comfort in the face of sorrow. When the young Ḥusayn goes missing, Fāṭima approaches her father sobbing. Muḥammad, too, starts crying and the two set off looking for Ḥusayn. They encounter a Jew who asks the Prophet why he is sad. The Prophet explains the situation and the Jew replies, "Do not be sad, for I saw him sleeping on such and such a hill." Muḥammad then…

> …went toward it, and the Jew went with him. When he came close to the hill, he saw a lizard running away with a green, leafy branch in its mouth. When the lizard saw the Prophet, it said with an eloquent tongue: "Peace be upon you, O beauty of the Day of Resurrection (*zayn al-qiyāma*)!" And [the lizard] truly bore witness (*shahida*) in [the Prophet's] favor. A hatchling lizard, his son, was with him. [The lizard] said: "I have not seen a family (*ahl bayt*) with more blessings than your family (*ahl baytika*), because my son was missing for three years. I went around looking for him, and I could not find him. When I saw your son a little while ago, I found [my son], and I am repaying him."
>
> The young lizard said: "O Messenger of God! The current took me away and deposited me in the sea, then the waves carried me to such and such an island, and I had no way out until the wind carried me away and put me down in my father's presence."
>
> The Prophet (saas) said: "Between that island and here is a thousand parasangs [leagues]." Thereupon, the Jew accepted Islam and said: "I bear witness (*ashhadu*) that there is no god but God and that you are the Messenger of God."[638]

The Jew's conversion comes as a result of this improbable reconnection, and it is all prompted by stories of the grief of losing a child. The story as it comes to us does not necessarily require talking lizards for Ḥusayn to be found, for there to be a miracle, or for the Jew to embrace Islam. Yet in adding the story of the lizards the animal realm is brought into the dialectic of loss and relief that brings everyone from the Prophet to the later Shīʿa to tears. Here and elsewhere animals play an active role in the drama of Ḥusayn's passion.

[638] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 211. This is possibly an embellishment of a similar story, not involving the Prophet's grief, found in al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 114ff. This second, longer story, does not include the details about Ḥusayn, Fāṭima, and the Jew (nor of the lizard's adoration for Ḥusayn); these additions extend the message of vindication to the Prophet's family through which Islam gains a convert.

At the moment of Ḥusayn's ultimate victory through defeat, birds react emotionally. Ayoub, drawing on Khwārizmī's *maqtal*, writes:

> When Ḥusayn died, birds ceased their happy music and stopped eating and drinking for days. A raven, who witnessed the fighting, came down and smeared its plumage with the sacred blood and flew to Medina. There it alighted on the wall of Fāṭimah, daughter of Ḥusayn, and began to weep. In many cultures the raven is an omen of death; in Middle Eastern cultures in particular, it symbolizes the angel of death.[639]

The above accounts are representative of the roles that animals and inanimate objects play in *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*. They are expressions of nature at large marking the gravity of Ḥusayn's drama, both in grief and in reverence. These non-human entities are immanently passible, and their passibility reflects on the cosmic imbuing of supernatural grief to them. The behavior of these signs of God (*āyāt Allāh*) emphasize the degree to which Ḥusayn's tragedy transcends the earthly battlefield.[640]

Liminal Heroes

Human passion similarly marks sentient beings, from Imams and Prophets to jinn and angels, and even to God and the cosmos. In normative Twelver Shīʿism, the biblical prophets and the twelve Imams share with Muḥammad divine support, supernatural insight, and protection from error.[641] Their attitudes and pronouncements display heavenly knowledge and reflect divine attitudes. Their passibility—love, suffering, wrath, contingency, etc.—reflects not just their

[639] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 131.

[640] For the idea of created entities as divine signs, see Q 42:29a "And of his signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and what He has dispersed throughout them of creatures." For a thorough discussion of the concept of divine signs, see, Binyamin Abrahamov. "Signs." *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe. http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQCOM_00182.

[641] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 65f.

human frailty but, due to their liminal status, also the nature of their participation in eternal reality. The late Abbasid *maqātil al-Ḥusayn* clearly display such passibility.

I explored the ways in which Ḥusayn typologically embodies Islamic prophets, such as Ishmael, Joseph, and Jesus, in the first section of this chapter. Here I will look at prophets again, not insofar as Ḥusayn is correlated with their types but rather how they have pre-sentient knowledge of and grief for Ḥusayn's passion. The prophets display vulnerability to grief, and they dread Ḥusayn's eventual death. Abraham (Ibrāhīm) is upset when faced with Ḥusayn's death, an event that he considers far more heart-wrenching than the potential sacrifice of his own son Ishmael (Ismāʿīl).[642] Jesus (ʿĪsā) is chief among a host of other biblical prophets who lament Ḥusayn's slaying centuries before the ʿĀshūrāʾ event. Moses seems to be anticipating Ḥusayn's anxiety in his Qurʾānic prayers (Q 28:21f.). [643] The paragon of passible prophets, though, is Ḥusayn's maternal grandfather Muḥammad. He clearly experiences grief and love; prophetic anger too plays a role in realized eschatology as seen in the narration of Muḥammad and the blind soldier, quoted at length earlier in this chapter. The Prophet "raised his head and said, 'O enemy of God! You have violated my female relatives and killed my descendants, and you have not preserved my rights, and then you have done what you have done?'" Muḥammad responds, "You have committed many dark deeds. Come close to me.' I came close to him, and I was all covered with blood. [The Prophet] said, 'This is the blood of my son al-Ḥusayn (as).' He lined my eyes with the blood, and since that time, I have not seen anything."[644]

Here Muḥammad's partisan righteousness illustrates divine condemnation of not only Ḥusayn's killers, but also those who stand idly by. The message to the Shīʿa community is

[642] Ibid, 32.
[643] Cf. ibid, 34. Moses' most germane line here is, "O my Lord! save me from people given to wrong-doing."
[644] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 80f.

clear—sins of omission are unacceptable when it comes to defending Ḥusayn—and the vehicle for this message is prophetic passibility. The *maqātil* go on to highlight that the twelve Imams, from ʿAlī to the Mahdī, understand and embody this message. For example, Ḥusayn's older brother Ḥasan displays both tenderness and mercy in response to pain and injustice:

> Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī had a ewe that he liked. One day he found it with a broken leg. So he asked a young man, 'Who broke her leg?' The young man said, 'I did.' He asked, 'Why?' The boy answered, 'To make you [Ḥasan] sad.' So Ḥasan said, 'I will make you happy. You are now free for almighty Allāh's sake.'[645]

ʿAlī, typically revered by the Twelvers as the pinnacle of the Imamate, is noticeably downplayed among religious heroes by the *maqtal* writers in favor of his father Muḥammad, his youngest son Ḥusayn, and even his predecessor in passion ʿĪsā (Jesus). Nevertheless, ʿAlī does participate in the familial anxiety surrounding his son's (and sons') impending demise.[646] Ḥusayn, too, joins his grandfather, father, and brother in forecasting his slaying, as in the case of an oracle against Shimr: "I have seen [a vision] that dogs were biting me, and among them was a most sly dog, who was the most vicious of them in [attacking] me, and he is you [Shimr], and he was afflicted with leprosy."[647]

Perhaps the ultimate way that Imams participate in divine passibility is in their status as both *liminal* and *persecuted*, which suggests that vulnerability to suffering marks them as they straddle the chasm between humanity and divinity. Ayoub makes cases both for their liminality and for their persecution. He argues:

> The tension we witness here is between viewing the martyrdom of Ḥusayn as that of a human being regardless of his status or that of a divine hero whose entire life is preordained. Both aspects are important for *Shīʿī* piety and it is on a balanced

[645] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 89.

[646] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 38f. (here ʿAlī is exposed to an oracle not just of his children's murders, but also of his own).

[647] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 97.

> presentation of these two aspects, not the rejection of either, that later *Shīʿī* imamology was based. Hence, official *Shīʿī* tradition has insisted on martyrdom as being the common factor in the life of every *Imam*. It is, moreover, martyrdom as a common motif that has provided the link between the *Imams* and the community.[648]

He observes that the Imams' liminality extends to them being "made of a certain substance" and that not just God but also the Imams participate in divine vengeance on behalf of the persecuted Twelver community.[649] Ayoub notes that some Shīʿī theologians consider Ḥusayn's body in particular to transcend materiality. These thinkers accept:

> […] the bodily death of *Imam* Ḥusayn, but consider that in this non-material or luminous body, *Imam* Ḥusayn ascended to heaven. This non-material body is known as *al-jism al-barzakhī*. It is a luminous body of a sort which is neither material nor merely a spirit. Rather, it is in between the two: a middle substance, so to speak, as the word *barzakh* (barrier) itself signifies.[650]

The Shīʿa reflecting on the extent of Ḥusayn's corporality include the Ismāʿīlīs (who frequently downplayed the reality of the physical in favor of the spiritual) and the extremist *ghulāt*; but this is true of Twelver thinkers as well. This appears to be an intentional parallel to the normative Islamic belief (based on an interpretation of Q 4:157f.) that the crucifixion of Jesus was illusory, but even if not it is an affirmation of Ḥusayn's liminality. Ḥusayn, Imams in general, and scriptural prophets are in the *maqātil* suffering liminal heroes, occupying a niche transcending the abovementioned *barzakh*, participating in the divine life while suffering the worst experiences known to humanity. Through all this, liminal heroes affected by this most grave of cosmic dramas grieve the death of the Prophet's grandson.

[648] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 124.
[649] Ibid, 17, 18.
[650] Ibid, 135.

Supernatural Realm

Jinn and angels, too, participate in the mourning to which the late Abbasid texts call Ḥusayn's partisans. Al-Ḥillī devotes a section of his *maqtal* to the lamentation of the jinn. Notably, he frequently presents them as catalysts for human lament. The womenfolk of the jinn, dressed in black (defying the normative understanding of jinn having no bodies), weep sorrowfully and strike their cheeks, inspiring humans to do the same.[651] The jinn, which had last wept at the Prophet's death, offer elegies and odes as they enjoin people to mourning: "O eye, make every effort / To endure [these tears] / [You and] those after me / Who weep (*yabkī*) for the martyrs (*shuhadāʾ*)."[652] Upon hearing the cries of the jinn, the Prophet's followers begin to grieve, surely a reflection of the ʿĀshūrāʾ practice of public grieving that had solidified among the Shīʿa by the end of the 11th century. By contrast the prototypical *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* from the earlier period, Abū Mikhnaf's, only *mentions* jinn once, and that in an offhand way.[653] Al-Ḥillī's message here is thus: if even supernatural beings are reduced to tears by Ḥusayn's slaying, then humans clearly must follow suit.

Angels play a similar role in grieving the fallen Imam. One angel above all, Gabriel (Jibrīl), is also intimately involved in the tender act of nurturing Ḥusayn as a youngster. In fact, Gabriel often serves as a second father to Ḥusayn (after Ḥusayn's grandfather Muḥammad rather than his biological father ʿAlī, a theme explored above) and acts as part of the family. Gabriel and Michael are the attendants at the wedding of ʿAlī and Fāṭima and Gabriel frequents their household.[654] The angel plays with the brothers Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and comforts Muḥammad at

[651] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 158.
[652] Ibid, 158.
[653] Abū Mikhnaf, *Maqtal*, 98.
[654] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 108.

the prospect of their deaths and at other trying times. One instance of the latter is found in a tradition found in Khwārizmī's *maqtal*. This reassurance comes at a time when the brothers have gone missing in the wilderness. Muḥammad has already consoled Fāṭima in her distress: "Do not weep, Fāṭima. By the one who holds my soul in His hand, their Creator is gentler with them than you are, and more merciful to them in their youth than you are." But now Muḥammad is distraught and it is Gabriel's turn to play comforter:

> No sooner had the Messenger of God finished his prayer (*duʿāʾ*) than Gabriel came down from Heaven, and with him were the great angels, saying "amen" to the Prophet's prayer. Gabriel said, "O my beloved (*ḥabīb*) Muḥammad! Do not be sad and do not worry. Be of good cheer, for your two sons are most excellent in this world and most excellent in the hereafter, and their father is even better than they. They are sleeping in the territory of the Banū al-Najjār; God has entrusted an angel with the task of protecting them."[655]

A chain of compassion is seen here: Fāṭima has sympathy for her sons, prompting the Messenger of God to have an aching empathy for her, which in turn prompts the angel to comfort Muhammad. Liminal passibility is fully visible here. The search party locates the missing pair, and the tenderness continues:

> Al-Ḥusayn was embracing al-Ḥasan, and the angel to whose care they had been entrusted had put one of his wings on the ground beneath them to protect them from the hot ground, and he had covered them with his other wing, to protect them from the heat of the sun. The Prophet (saas) went toward them enthusiastically and kissed one of them and then the other. Then he caressed them with his hand to wake them up. When they woke up, the Prophet carried al-Ḥasan on his shoulder, and Gabriel carried al-Ḥusayn on a feather of his wing, and they left the territory [of the Banū al-Najjār]. The Prophet (saas) said: "By God, I shall honor the two of you today the way that God Almighty has honored you in the Heavens."[656]

Here we see Muḥammad as loving and gentle, Gabriel as caring and playful (elsewhere when the angel carries one of them on his shoulder, they find it fun), and God shows favoritism and

[655] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 166.
[656] Ibid, 166.

deference. Human passibility saturates this story, which itself is typical of many tales of Ḥusayn's youth.

In addition to lovingkindness, angels also raise their voices in drastic lament. Much like the Johannine Jesus, Ḥusayn appears after death with his wounds intact. Two similar narrations show the angels' response to the shock of seeing the decapitated Imam.

> [Fāṭima] will look and see Ḥusayn (as) standing there without a head. She will cry out, and I will cry out at [the sound of] her cry, and the angels will cry out at [the sound of] her cry.[657]
>
> [A] cap of light shall be given to Fāṭima (as). Ḥusayn (as) shall come forward, with his head in his hand. When she sees him, she will gasp in such a way that every angel in Heaven and every prophet sent with a message will weep (*bakā*) for her. God, praised and exalted, will present him to her in the best form, fighting against his killers without his head.[658]

The root of the verb applied to the angels in the first narration, *ṣ-r-kh*, connotes shrieking, clamoring, or shouting while in the second narration *b-k-y* connotes weeping, bewailing, or lamenting. In the first case the angels appear to be surprised by Fāṭima's cry, while in the second her tears move them to their own mourning. Angels, like jinn, animals, and inanimate beings, are passible in their reaction to Ḥusayn's calamity. This pattern transcends even these categories.

The Cosmos

Angels and jinn are not the only supernatural entities to display passibility at Ḥusayn's slaying. In this section I show that Ḥusayn's martyrdom affects a passionate response in cosmic realms such as the heavens themselves. Khwārizmī suggests that, if not for Fāṭima's sons, Hell

[657] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 81; al-Ḥillī presents this same tradition with only linguistic variants. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, Muthīr al-Ahzān, 119.
[658] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 120.

might be able to claim superiority over heaven. This is seen in a story in which both are anthropomorphized:

> Heaven and Hell were having a boasting contest, and Heaven said: "I am better than you." Hell said: "No, I am better than you." Heaven asked: "How so?" Hell said: "I am the abode of the tyrants and Pharaoh and Nimrod." Heaven was speechless, then God, blessed and almighty be He inspired her, [saying]: "Do not be downtrodden. I shall decorate your pillars with al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn." Then [Heaven] walked proudly, the way a bride walks proudly into her bridal chamber.[659]

Other narratives show the cosmos involved in Ḥusayn's drama. Al-Ḥillī states, "Heaven has never wept except for Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā [John the Baptist] and al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī."[660] He further relates a prediction that the "heavens will rain blood" at Ḥusayn's death and notes that "the sky rained blood on the day of his slaying."[661] The sixth Imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, ties this theme even to God:

> Peace be upon you, O blood revenge (*thāʾr*) of God and son of the blood revenge of God. Peace be upon you, O bowstring of God stretched out across Heaven and Earth. I bear witness that your blood remains in eternal paradise and that the shadows of the Throne tremble for its sake, and that all beings have wept for it, and that the seven Heavens and seven Earths have wept (*bakat*) for it.[662]

The phrase "*thāʾr Allāh*" refers to divine vengeance (from a verb meaning to shed blood or give milk, or possibly meaning tear-wet; I will return to this concept in discussing divine passibility). Here the Imam seems to collapse Ḥusayn's tragic end into divine experience and heavenly lament. Regardless of whether God's passibility here includes lamentation and

[659] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 155; as shall be seen soon, the motif of two people arguing over which one is better pervades the *maqātil*; here the cosmic realms are brought into this human drama.

[660] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 13.

[661] Ibid, 40.

[662] Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq in ibid, 13. For further consideration of the term *thāʾr*, see below.

mutability or merely anger, Jaʿfar is here attesting to cosmic (if not divine) vulnerability to all three.

The cosmos are even prepared to react to the Prophet's grandsons crying as children. Khwārizmī relates that one day the Holy Family was without food and was suffering from severe hunger pangs. In an effort to take his mind off his plight Muḥammad decided to go to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, but when he found them sleeping and embraced them, their eyes welled up. A companion offered to help Muḥammad carry the boys home, but the Prophet insisted on wiping away their tears, declaring, "I swear by Allāh who sent me as a Prophet that if one tear drop reached the ground, famine would prevail until doomsday."[663] This narrative, like many, is literarily hyperbolic—as he carried them, all three wept without famine overtaking the world—but the idea remains that in Ḥusayn and his family the orders of magnitude between worldwide famine and the hunger of a little child are collapsed. Ḥusayn's earthly struggles are larger than life, and project onto the heavens and the earth.

Divine Passibility

Having established that passibility both marks and extends beyond the liminal hero Ḥusayn, we turn now to the question of God's relationship to psychic change and its correlates (given the fivefold typology of passibility outlined above: passion, suffering, temporality, deference, and partisanship). Beyond the celestial realm, even God appears passible when engaging with Ḥusayn's trials and defeat. We will see how the God of the late Abbasid *maqātil* is not as utterly impassible as God may seem in normative Islamic portrayals.

[663] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 93.

Descriptors of God used in the Qurʾān (viz., *Allāh yuḥibb*, "God loves"), the Ninety-Nine Names (*al-Ṣabūr*, "The Patient One"), or both (*al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, "The Merciful, the Compassionate) suggest divine passibility. However, participants in the ninth century Translation Movement and later Scholastic philosophers and theologians like Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Taymiyya presented instead an impassible deity.[664] This leads the scholar of religion Peter Weigel to conclude in sweeping fashion that, "Islam regards the ninety-nine names of Allah as titles of honor and not at all descriptions of God's essence," an assessment of the tradition with which the language of *The Crucified God* might agree.[665] However, "Islam" is much more complex and the term defies reductionistic essentialisms. Theosophical rigor is not the primary motivator of every Islamic writer. In the *maqātil,* which are undergirded by what we identified in Chapter II as narrative rather than systematic theology, the authors seek more to illustrate the grave ramifications of Ḥusayn's passion than to defend God against perceived vulnerability to emotion, suffering, temporality, deference, and partisanship. When the decapitated Ḥusayn arrives in Heaven and his gruesome injury shocks Fāṭima, God responds passionately.[666] The injustice perpetrated by Yazīd's forces interrupts even divine providence, which is typically understood to be immutable: an ambiguous phrase, "*bi-ḥaqq Allāh illā marartum bi-nā ʿalā maṣraʿ al-ḥusayn*" used to describe a reaction to Yazīd's perpetration of injustice, might be translated "[it is] not God's decree but that you have passed by us at the event of Ḥusayn's

[664] Peter Weigel, "Divine Simplicity" in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ISSN 2161-0002), https://www.iep.utm.edu/div-simp/; A.J. Arberry. *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 104ff.

[665] Weigel, "Simplicity;" Moltmann 271. Moltmann dismisses the Judaisms of Maimonides and Halevi as similarly "medieval" with some frequency, though he sees the Jewish tradition as redeemed in *pathetic* scholars like Heschel in a way that he does not see in contemporary Islamic reflection.

[666] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 119; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 81f.

violent death," suggesting that their harassment of Ḥusayn's womenfolk is counter to the whims of Providence.

This study, as explicated in the introductory chapter, expands the definition of divine impassibility beyond Aristotle's unmoved Mover in order to make the concept more conversant with the narrative theologies implicit in texts describing the passions of Christ and Ḥusayn. The five types of passibility outlined in Chapter I saturate the experience of the divine life in the Ḥusaynid drama. Considering the first type, God is clearly passionate. According to the *maqtal* authors, on the gates of Paradise is inscribed, "There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, ʿAlī is the beloved (*ḥabīb*) of God…"[667] This is an interesting variant of the typical Shīʿa confession of faith in which ʿAlī is named as God's friend (*walīy*). Elsewhere we read that the pro-ʿAlids' opponents' "hatred of the loved ones (*aḥibbāʾ*) of God and of the loved ones (*aḥibbāʾ*) of the Messenger of God has led them to deny that the children of ʿAlī by Fāṭima are children of the Messenger."[668] Divine love for people often involves reciprocal passion, as in the Prophet's saying, "Tomorrow I shall give the banner to a man who loves (*yuḥibbu*) God and His Messenger, and who God and His Messenger love (*yuḥibbu*)."[669] This reciprocity also includes Muḥammad, who once "put one of his hands on the back of [Ḥusayn's] neck and the other under his chin, and he kissed him on the mouth and said: 'Ḥusayn is of me, and I am of

[667] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 16.

[668] Ibid, 17.

[669] Ibid, 172. Elsewhere the Prophet implies a special reciprocity of love that straddles the cosmic gap between the eternal and the temporal: "'O Muslims! Shall I show you who has the best father and mother?' They said: 'Yes, O Messenger of God!' He said: "Behold al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, for their father is ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib. He loves (*yuḥibbu*) God and His Messenger, and God and His Messenger love (*yuḥibbu*) him. Their mother is Fāṭima, daughter of the Messenger of God; God has honored her in Heaven and on Earth.'" Ibid, 167.

Ḥusayn. God loves (*aḥabba*) anyone who loves (*aḥabba*) Ḥusayn, for Ḥusayn is one of the grandchildren.'"[670]

The *maqtal* writers do not ascribe suffering and sadness to God as directly as they do love and anger, but a theology from below sheds light on the degree to which feelings of pain and loss permeate the cosmic realm.[671] Specifically, liminal heroes are not immune to, and in some instances are almost defined by, suffering. Ḥusayn's passion is but the most punctuated example of this, and there is some evidence that the suffering of righteous liminal heroes pains God. An oft-repeated refrain in the *maqātil* is the Messenger of God declaring, "whoever hurts Fāṭima hurts me."[672] Germane to this study is whether this chain of injury stops with the Prophet or whether it has implications for divine impassibility. Some sources extend the tradition with the phrase, "and whoever hurts me angers God," but at least one prominent tenth century narration hints at divine pain. The early Jaʿfarī scholar Ibn Bābawayh, known also as al-Sheikh al-Ṣadūq, recounts the saying as follows: "Fāṭima is a part (*baʿḍa*) of me and I am a part of her and whoever hurts her (*adhāha*) hurts me [and] whoever hurts me hurts God."[673] Other versions add a second pair of verbs, *rāba* / *yarīb*, "displeases and disquiets" alongside *adha*, "hurts, damages, causes to suffer."[674] Divine impassibility does not seem to have been a concern for those who have transmitted these versions of the story of Fāṭima's pain.[675]

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[670] Depending on inflectional vowels, this sentence could also mean "He who loves Ḥusayn loves God;"al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 214.

[671] See Chapter II for an explication of "theology from below."

[672] E.g., al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 91f.

[673] Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Babawayh, *ʿIlal al-Sharāyiʿ wa-Ṣadūq* (Dar al-Mortada: Beirut, 2006), 184.

[674] Lane, Edward, *Arabic–English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863), 215; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 4/1902.

[675] Interestingly, term for those who "hurt, harm, cause pain to, or annoy" God and God's Messenger (*al-adhīn yūʾdhūn allāh wa-rasūlahi*) is used in Q 33:57, though the history of exegesis of this *aya* is beyond the scope of this project. In general commentators describe the unbelievers who commit this sin but do not comment on the theological implications for divine impassibility inherent in God being subject to this harm.

Still, suffering and passion are only two components of passibility; alongside them are temporality, deference, and partisanship. On these three points, as on the first two, the narrative theology that emerges from the late Abbasid *maqtal* texts conveys a conception of a deity who is far from impassible.

God in a sense is outside of time in this theology; so too is the Prophet's Household. As noted above, *Ahl al-Bayt* is understood by Shīʿite theology to have entered into being two thousand years before the creation of Adam and Eve."[676] Yet God does not just interact with Muḥammad and his family in pre-eternity; these entities seem to experience time together. Speaking to Fāṭima, Muḥammad declares:

> My daughter, God has examined the people of the Earth and (*fa*) has chosen me as a prophet. Then (*thumma*) He chose again, and (*fa*) he chose among them your husband ʿAlī, and (*fa*) He made him a brother and regent (*waṣīy*) for me. Then (*thumma*) He chose a third time, and (*fa*) he chose you and your mother and (*fa*) made you mistresses of the women of the worlds. Then (*thumma*) He chose a fourth time, and (*fa*) He chose your two sons, and (*fa*) He made them masters of the young people of Paradise.[677]

The use of the particles *fa* and *thumma* indicate decisions made consecutively and in time. In fact, this type of *fa* is also causative—God seems here to be acting sequentially, implying temporality. One lengthy narrative describes a back-and-forth discussion involving family members, angels, and God; it shows the latter clearly involved, linearly, in the former's day-to-day affairs. Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are debating which of the two has better handwriting. Seeking an arbiter, they ask their mother to judge between them. Not willing "to offend either of them by preferring the handwriting of one of them over the other," Fāṭima sends them to their father for a pronouncement.[678] ʿAlī, too, is "loathe to offend either of them," so he sends them to their

[676] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 107.
[677] Ibid, 109.
[678] Here and following, al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 180f.

grandfather. Muḥammad, in turn, refers the matter to Gabriel, who suggests the Angel of Music, Isrāfīl, who declares, "I shall not judge between them, but I shall ask God Almighty to judge between them." Yet even God wants no part of this arbitration: "I shall not judge between them, but their mother Fāṭima shall judge between them." God's temporality and the liminal membrane between heaven and earth are seen in Fāṭima's resolution:

> Fāṭima said: "I shall judge between them, O Lord!" She had a necklace, and she said [to the boys]: "I shall unstring this necklace before you. Whichever of you takes more of its stones is the one whose handwriting is better." She unstrung it, and at that time, Gabriel was at the foot of the throne. God commanded him to descend to Earth and to divide the stones in half between [al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn], so that neither of them would be offended. Gabriel did so, to honor them and magnify them.

In this story we see not only God's participation in human time but also God's deference to liminal heroes, namely to Fāṭima as the most appropriate judge of her boys' handwriting skills. God is involved in something as seemingly inconsequential as a penmanship dispute, yet even in this small matter refuses to arbitrate—that is their mother's job. Yet even the deferential deity does not want one brother to be found superior to the other, and so intervenes supernaturally.

We also see this type of deference in conjunction with passion and partisanship in the eschatologically delayed punishment for Ḥusayn's opponents.[679] At this point a heuristic—the distinction between vengeance as *thāʾr* and vengeance as *intiqām*—might be useful. Though more is made of the distinction than perhaps has solid historical-linguistic grounding, there is a useful difference between interpretations of these two words for vengeance in Arab parlance. One, *thāʾr*, is often used to describe human avenging of a wrongdoing and is associated with the *jāhilīya* (Arabs who lived in ignorance prior to the Islamic era); the other, *intiqām*, can refer to divine retribution. While Muslims and Arabists often use these terms interchangeably, they may

[679] Cf. ibid, 109, 220.

still serve as a useful conceptualization for interpreting God's role in addressing Ḥusayn's slaying.[680] This is evident from one of the more striking developments of *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* as a genre. The earliest martyrologists devote almost equal space in their texts to the events that come *after* Ḥusayn's killing, especially the historical details of pro-ʿAlid vengeance against the ruling Umayyads. By the late Abbasid era, however, vengeance belongs much more to the Lord and to those liminal heroes to whom God defers. ʿAlī plays a central role in meting out divine retribution, as does Fāṭima (both doing so from beside the Throne on the Day of Judgment), but ultimately God is the authority behind the punishment.[681] Even when crimes against *Ahl al-Bayt* take place on the battlefield, the violence against the perpetrators can be deferred eschatologically (while also coming immediately from a human source). For instance, Ḥusayn reacts on the battlefield to the killing of his nephew with vengeance not just in the form of his sword but also through an invocation of God's retribution: "To hell with the people who have killed you. Their opponent on the Day of Judgment will be your grandfather."[682] Ḥusayn responds to a similar killing by crying out, "May God kill the people who have killed you! How impudent they are towards God for violating the womenfolk of the Prophet."[683] His eyes brimming with tears, he continues, "May the world go to ruin without you!" The very cosmos participates in avenging those fallen on the plains of Karbalāʾ. The Prophet will be involved in this heavenly retribution: Muḥammad says that in the afterlife Ḥusayn will "confront his killers

[680] In an interesting passage, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq refers to Ḥusayn as the "blood (*thār*) of God and son of the blood (*thār*) of God"(Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 13). This word *thār* may be related to *thāʾr* (they differ only by a hamza) or it may be a reference to God's blood itself (it comes from verb meaning to shed blood or give milk, or possibly meaning tear-wet). Compare the theoretical distinction that George Williams (cited in the introduction to this dissertation) notes between religiously sanctioned violence and "violence eschatologically postponed." George H. Williams, "Four Modalities of Violence, with Special Reference to the Writings of Georges Sorel: Part One" in *Journal of Church and State*.

[681] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 119.

[682] Ibid, 104.

[683] Ibid, 102.

without his head. God will gather for me his killers and those who treated him unjustly and those who took part in [the shedding of] his blood, and I [Muḥammad] will kill them until I reach the last one."[684]

This ability to provoke divine *intiqām* is not restricted to Ḥusayn and his grandfather; other liminal heroes too have sway over how divine justice is meted out. Fāṭima will ask that lovers of her family be delivered from hellfire, and God will agree to this request. The reverse of this petition takes a strikingly *legal* form—as the wronged party, Fāṭima is entitled to request vengeance against the killers of her son. A tradition recounted through the fifth Imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir, points to an interesting dynamic between Fāṭima and God when resurrected souls parade before the throne of judgment.[685] God would order a reprobate sinner to the fire, but Fāṭima would notice that the word "lover" (*muḥibb*) was written on that person's forehead, indicating that this miscreant supported the family of the Prophet. Fāṭima would protest, prompting God to confess, "I ordered the servant of mine to the fire so that thou mayest intercede with me on his behalf and I would accept thine intercession for him, in order to manifest…thy status with me."[686] The divine *command* is thus overwhelmed by Fāṭima's sympathy for her father's household in light of her son's passion.

Thus, in addition to love and possibly sorrow, God's passion is seen in divine wrath. Anger is closely linked with other dimensions of passibility, namely temporality and partisanship. In *reaction* to temporal injustices perpetrated against God's favored ones, God becomes angry at the perpetrators. This is especially seen in the oft-repeated refrain concerning Fāṭima, "God will be angry on her behalf." This anger, prompted by events on earth, will have

[684] Ibid, 119.
[685] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 213ff.
[686] Ibid.

perpetual consequences. For example, upon seeing the horrific results of the Battle of Karbalāʾ, Fāṭima will cry out:

> "O my son! O fruit of my heart!" God, praised and exalted be He, will be angry on her behalf. He will summon a fiery pit of Hell called Hab Hab that had been set alight a thousand years ago [and had burned] until it had turned black, [an inferno] which no spirit (*rūḥ*) enters, and from which no sorrow (*ghamm*) emerges.[687]

Fāṭima suffers injustice, so God stokes the Hab Hab fire. This may serve to add an anthropopathic quality to God, especially in the precise context of seventh century Arab conceptions of justice. God reacts in preferential anger and partisanship in fulfilling *intiqām* vengeance. God's deference to liminal heroes rarely wavers. One interesting counterexample involving Moses shows a condition that facilitates the trumping of deference. Just as elsewhere Fāṭima is willing to spare lovers of the Prophet's household, so is God unwilling to spare its ultimate adversary even should Moses ask for such mercy:

> Mūsā ibn ʿImrān [Moses] asked his Lord: "O Lord! My brother Hārūn [Aaron] has died, so forgive him." God sent inspiration to him, [saying]: "O Mūsā ibn ʿImrān! If you ask Me [to forgive] the first ones and the last ones, I shall answer [your request], except for the killer of al-Ḥusayn.[688]

Here we see that the limit to God's deference is not God's impassibility but rather God's preference for *Ahl al-Bayt*. God is remarkably discriminatory in the Shīʿa (literally, "partisan") estimation. This is a challenge to categories of God as impartial and Islam as universal: for the *maqtal* writers one's position vis-à-vis Ḥusayn matters to an eternal degree. As just seen, God will respond to Fāṭima's anguished cry with passionate anger, calling forth a special hellfire to engulf Ḥusayn's killers.[689] Partisanship is connected to a sort of Jacob's ladder of liminality, in

[687] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 82; cf. Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān,* 120.
[688] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Luhūf,* 82.
[689] Ibid.

which the cause of *Ahl al-Bayt* links everyone from the lowliest of devotees to Godself (as we saw earlier in this chapter): "The Messenger of God (saas) said: 'On the Day of Judgment, I shall take hold of God's belt knot (*ḥijza*), and you, O ʿAlī, shall take hold of my belt knot. Your children shall take hold of your belt knot, and the partisans (*shīʿa*) of your children shall take hold of their belt knots.'"[690] In this manner those linked by preference for Muḥammad's family will also be linked by a series of ropes which stretch from the lowliest of the Holy Family's partisans to its ultimate partisan, God. Partisanship, along with deference, temporality, suffering, and passions like love and anger, is a divine property that the late Abbasid *maqtal* writers weave into their narratives. If impassibility is defined as the absence of such properties, then God like the liminal heroes in the Ḥusayn drama is clearly far from impassible.

Conclusion

The first Muslim community held the Prophet as a liminal vessel through which the divine could communicate, and even Muḥammad's death did not rupture the link between the transcendent and the immanent. The Qurʾān remained, a fact that Khwārizmī acknowledges through a Prophetic saying: "I shall leave among you, O man and *jinn* the Book of God as a rope stretched out between Heaven and Earth."[691] This liminal bridge is incomplete, however, for Khwārizmī: it needs a complement. The Prophet continues, "The People of my House (*ahl baytī*) are my near relations (*ʿitra*). Indeed, God the Gentle, the All-Aware, has told me that the two of them shall not be separated until they return to me on the sacred ground (*ḥawḍ*), so be sure to

[690] Al-Khwārizmī, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn*, 159.
[691] Ibid, 157.

follow the two of them as successors to me." Muḥammad's household, consisting of Fāṭima and the Twelve Imams, is a marker of divine proximity as much as the Holy Book is.

Because of the ignobility of most of their demises, Shīʿism possesses a narrative paradigm for rethinking the nature of the metaphysically liminal. It is not alone. Moltmann and others see divine passibility in Christianity; Ayoub sees it in Judaism through the Suffering Servant just as Wiesel does through the execution of a boy at Auschwitz.[692] Ayoub even suggests a parallel between redemptive suffering in Shīʿa Islam and the reduction of the Mesopotamian deity Tammuz to "the depths of darkness and death."[693] This is not to say that the slaying of Ḥusayn is just another example of a pan-religious phenomenon; Karbalāʾ is a unique event and the history of its interpretation is distinctive. It offers a way to (re)read part of the Islamic tradition through the lens of a passible deity.

Of significant interest to this study is its implications for a world that underwent an existential crisis through twentieth century horrors. The question, "Where is God?" as Moltmann cites Wiesel, demands a theological response. The twentieth century is not the only era that has witnessed the suffering of the innocent. Liminal heroes, as remembered in scriptures and the *maqātil*, demonstrate that there has been a long pattern of righteous people suffering injustice at the hands of the powerful. Recent theological thinkers like Moltmann, Altizer, Rubenstein, Kitamori, and Fiddes, pay special attention to the place of God in human suffering. They are not alone, and the paradigm of scriptural narratives they use is not their sole property. These contemporary thinkers share with the *maqtal* authors a hermeneutic of passion.

[692] See Chapter III for Wiesel's narration in *Night*, which is one of the theological foundations of Moltmann's theology of the cross.
[693] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 231.

Ḥusayn, as a suffering hero with supernatural dimensions, is foremost among a set of liminal entities that participate in the divine life not just *through* but *because of* Ḥusayn's passion. This passion reaches into the center of the heavenly court and has an impact on the divine. Al-Ḥillī reports a line of poetry that aptly captures the theodicy with which the heavens and the earth wrestle passionately: *wa-yughzā al-ḥusayn wa-abnāʾuhu* / *wa-hadhā min al-muʿjib al-muʿḍil* ("Al-Ḥusayn and his sons were defeated in battle / And this is a strange and puzzling thing").[694] This strange and puzzling thing may be an event that prompts a reconsideration of how God is understood.

[694] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān*, 127.

Chapter VII: Conclusion: Assessment and Areas for Further Study

Dissertation Summary

This dissertation has laid out Jürgen Moltmann's objection to strict divine impassibility in his manuscript *The Crucified God* and explored themes of liminal passion in the *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*. We have seen that in each of these cases God is depicted as compassionate toward the human condition. Having analyzed these texts through careful reading, we are now in a position to bring them together. We have posed the question of whether a correlate to this challenge can be found in Islam, and it suggests that, when read through the lens of liminality, narratives of the suffering of Ḥusayn serve as just such a correlate. These two horizons fuse over the topic of passibility: read from below, Ḥusayn's passion has implications for the divine economy. Here I first take stock of the moves I have made in the previous chapters and assess where this study leaves us in terms of the doctrines of God suggested by Moltmann and the *maqātil*. They are, I claim, morphologically similar even though they are expressed in the idioms of different cultural dialects. I then suggest four areas for possible further study: the normativity of the traditions that the texts represent, possible Sunnī correlates, later Shīʿī developments, and the potential for integrating Islam more fully into Moltmannian thought. I conclude with an overall assessment of where this study leaves us.

Divine passibility is a complex concept. Christians often root the Platonic notion of divine aseity (being unoriginated and unacted upon) in Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." The divine is, in this sense, unchanging and unchangeable. Yet this doctrine misses a crucial point about the "unchanging" nature of Christ—he is first and foremost a lover and a sufferer. From the swaddling cloths (a garment usually reserved for

burial) to Golgotha, Jesus' unchanging nature is one of engagement and solidarity with a suffering humanity; it is this nature that does not change. The same can be said for the immaculate Ḥusayn: his lot in life was to die for the sake of justice and righteousness. Passibility marks both figures through and through; neither is exempt from full humanity and the consequences thereof. At the same time, neither is a mere mortal—both are imbued with extra-natural properties and live eternally beside God's throne; both are conduits by which believers enter everlasting bliss. According to the *maqtal* literature Ḥusayn is less a fallen soldier / military hero and more a victim of injustice imbued with supernatural characteristics; something similar can be said of Jesus' status in Christian thought. In short, they are liminal heroes, straddling the otherwise unstraddleable chasm between humanity and divinity. They are not, however, completely congruous. Ḥusayn is by no means part of some Trinity (or binity) and he is not an object of worship. Furthermore, although by tradition the killing of Ḥusayn marked the killing of the *takbīr* ("There is no god but God"), normative Shīʿa Islam is not prepared to afford Ḥusayn fully divine status.[695] Thus, Ḥusayn is not a Christ figure *per se*; I do not intend to imply that Ḥusayn's sacrifice saves the whole world, but that it is a redemptive act on behalf of the partisans of ʿAlī.

In this way, Ḥusayn plays a salvific role for the Shīʿa community. The *logic* of *kenosis* (see Philippians 2:7—God self-emptied in the person of Jesus of Nazareth) applies well to the Imam: through his submission to suffering and death, he has attained a high rank in heaven and is a metaphorical gate through which believers enter Paradise.[696] Standing with him in solidarity

[695] Ibn Namā al-Ḥillī, *Muthīr al-Ahzān,* 158.

[696] The Greek phrase ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεvis is variously rendered as "emptied himself," "made himself nothing," or "made himself of no reputation" in prominent English translations. The Christ hymn, of which Php 2:7 is a part, notes the dialectic between this self-emptying and Jesus' ultimate vindication. This has implications for divine imminence and the relationship between God and a corrupted created order.

are the cosmos, his mother Fāṭima, his grandfather Muḥammad, and even God. Through Ḥusayn we glimpse the divine pathos, something that 'orthodox' Islam has long been reticent to acknowledge philosophically.[697] And yet there are narrative expressions of the divine pathos embedded in the most canonical of Islamic texts; consider, for example, an oft-cited *hadith*: "One who hurts a Muslim, he hurts me [Muḥammad] and one who hurts me, hurts God."[698]

Moltmann's objection to theopassianism involves the disconnect in the doctrine between divine immanence and divine economy. If the Trinity is to remain the Trinity, it must be fully involved in the Crucifixion of Christ. The Son suffers the agony of estrangement from the Father; the Father suffers the agony of the death of the Son. God is fully present in, with, and to Jesus of Nazareth in the moment of sacrifice. The *maqtal* compilers suggest something similar—the suffering of Ḥusayn reverberates throughout the cosmos and prompts God to a passible response. This is not to say that Ḥusayn is divine but rather that he is a liminal figure, straddling the temporal and cosmic realms. Like Moltmann's Jesus, the *maqātil*'s Ḥusayn prompts a passionate *response* to a tragic earthly event. God is moved, either in anger or in pain, at the temporal slaying of the Prophet's grandson.

[697] I use "orthodox" here conventionally to refer to the normative tradition as it has been received and practiced writ large. See Alexander Knysh, "'Orthodoxy' and 'Heresy' in Medieval Islam: An Essay in Reassessment" in *The Muslim World* LXXXIII.1 (1993), 49f.

[698] Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī in Yūsuf b. Ismāʿīl al-Nabahānī, *Al-Sharaf al-Muʾabbad li-Āl Muḥammad*, ed. Abī al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. Manṣūr Qurṭām (Gaza: al-Markaz al-Waṭanī li-l-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt, 2015), 146; Yusuf Qaradawi substitutes *dhimmī* (protected non-Muslim) for "Muslim" at this point. The verb here is *ādhā*, connoting harming or causing pain. Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, trans. Kamal El-Helbawy, *et. al*., Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2013, 382.

Taking Stock

Though the Translation Movement's importation of Greek philosophical concepts removed God from all passibility, the early *maqātil* narratives clearly suggest that God *feels*.[699] The *maqtal* genre is emphatic that liminal heroes such as Ḥusayn often attain victory through defeat, pleasure through suffering, eternality through mortality. They straddle experiences of earthly passions and heavenly rewards. They comply, if only morphologically, with St. Paul's notion of elevation through degradation and touch on his notion of divine passibility.[700]

This dissertation has shown that there is an affinity between the type of passibility that Moltmann suggests in light of twentieth century horrors and that which is suggested in the *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*.[701] The fusion of horizons between these texts, when read with a focus on passibility, is illuminative. The *maqātil*'s Ḥusayn is simultaneously pristine and blemished, transcendent and immanent, cosmic and earthy—in a word, liminal. In him we have seen a wholly passible figure whose passion has touched the heavens and prompted a passible God to feel and act. In short, this project suggests that Ḥusayn functions as a passible liminal figure in 'Alid hagiography, one whose suffering has implications for an Islamic doctrine of God that can be conversant with Moltmannian Christianity. Though this project has focused on Twelver Shi'ism, it has demonstrated that there was considerable sectarian fluidity in the formation of the genre (see al-Ṭabarī, al-Iṣfahānī, and al-Khwārizmī).

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[699] Cristina D'Ancona. "Greek Sources in Arabic and Islamic Philosophy" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/arabic-islamic-greek/.

[700] Philippians 2:5-11.

[701] At least one contemporary scholar, Daniel Tai-yin Tsoi, has drawn explicit parallel between the Jesus of Motmannian Christianity and the Husayn of Twelver Islam; I do not conclude that the two are analogous but that they share morphological similarities in the economy of salvation. Cf. Daniel Tai-yin Tsoi. "'When Muslims meet Moltmann' – can Jürgen Moltmann's theology of suffering help forcibly displaced ex-Shi'ite Iranians to reconsider their understanding of God?" in *Practical Theology* vol. 13 no. 3 (2020), 15.

The idea of Ḥusayn as a liminal hero is helpful for future Christian-Muslim dialogue surrounding this doctrine: the God of Moltmann and the God of the *maqātil* are both subject to passion and therefore not impassible. Correlates to this picture of divine passibility exist outside of the three late Abbasid *maqātil* of interest here; further study might uncover a broader theory of Islamic approaches to passibility. Four areas invite such further study.

Directions for Future Study

These four areas of suggested future inquiry can be expressed in terms of questions, which I will address briefly in this conclusion and which could be productive directions for further investigation. After posing each question, I will discuss the contours that each line of research could take. Each question concerns the scope of possible application of this dissertation's findings: How broadly can we theologize based on the selected texts? I suggest initial responses to the posed questions while suggesting that further study can delve deeper into these areas of investigation.

At this point I introduce the questions and the rationale for them; below I will address them at further length. First, are Moltmann's writings and late Abbasid texts normative for their wider traditions? More specifically, where can we locate a challenge to Chalcedon's philosophical underpinnings within the broader Christian narrative? And to what extent is a reading of the Islamic tradition that is compatible with Moltmannian thought within the bounds of normative Islam? The second and third questions concern the place of the late Abbasid *maqātil* in the broader Islamic tradition. Do Sunnī texts contain resources for a study parallel to the one undertaken in this dissertation? The suffering of two liminal heroes, the Prophet in his Year of Sorrow and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in his trial during the *mihna* inquisition, provides useful

paradigms that may be parallel to Ḥusayn's passion, as do consideration of the concepts of *balāʾ* and *ṣabr*. Do later Shīʿī reflections on Ḥusayn's martyrdom contain a similar conception of divine passibility to the one embedded in the late Abbasid accounts? How has later Shīʿism developed martyrologies of Ḥusayn? Further study of two later "generations" of *maqātil* (those of the Safavid and modern eras) might reveal trends in the portrayal of Ḥusayn's loftiness and therefore have implications for a doctrine of God when read from below. The fourth question turns back to Moltmann; again I am interested in the wider scope and applicability of this project's findings. Now that we have seen what insights a Moltmannian reading of *maqātil* can yield, what would a broader reading of Islam look like from a Moltmannian vantage point? Can the theology that Moltmann develops in his writings account for the richness of the Islamic theological heritage? If Moltmann's inheritors can account for this, Muslim-Christian dialogue surrounding the notion of divine pathos, and perhaps interreligious dialogue also more generally, might be advanced. In other words, is there room for both interlocutors at the dialogue table? On the whole, these questions address the locus of the particular intertextual dialogue that this dissertation proposes within a broader religious context.

Normativity

I suggest that future research can investigate how broadly the conclusions of this project can be applied: To what extent do the texts investigated in this study represent the thoughts and beliefs of the religious traditions from which they emanate? Moltmann's writings, particularly his most recent ones, are still fresh scholarship that will surely be a focus of some Christian theology for years to come. How will the reception of Moltmann's thought locate him in the history of Christian thought, particularly on the issue of theopassianism? Earlier in this study, I

took up the question of how normative Moltmann's challenge to Chalcedon is. The latter is, after all, one of the seven ecumenical councils widely regarded as authoritative for the Church. As I discussed, divine impassibility (being interpreted as the passibility of Christ's humanity and impassibility of his divinity) has long been an assertion of orthodox Christianity, and "Death of God" theories (in their Lutheran, Nietzschian, and Altizeran instantiations) notwithstanding, theopassianism is largely incompatible with a Parapetetic understanding of an Unmoved Mover.[702] Future scholarship that discusses Moltmann's contribution to this history will add to understandings of his location within the broader field of Christian theology. Germane to the this question are the critical readings of Paul Fiddes, Rosaline Bradbury, Don Schweitzer, Ronald Stephen Cole-Turner, and other scholars of divine passibility including Bruce D. Marshall, Bruce L. McCormack, Gary Culpepper, Gilles Emery, Kazō Kitamori, Robert W. Jenson, and Thomas G. Weinandy. These thinkers have convincingly shown Moltmann's thought is not outside the Christian pale and that his theology is intellectually rigorous.

Likewise, to what extent is Twelver thought integrated into the larger body of Islamic theology?[703] The Twelver tradition is central enough within Islam that its narrative tradition deserves to be taken seriously in Islamic theology, but what relationships and connections are there between these areas of Twelver thought and other Islamic theological and historical discourses? I have demonstrated that neither Moltmann nor the *maqtal* tradition are heterodox, yet their respective positions within their theological traditions remain rich areas for future study. Within their sects (contemporary Protestantism and Twelver Shīʿism), both sets of texts are

[702] The Chalcedonian Creed asserts, "the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved," and the property of the divine nature is understood to be immune to suffering.

[703] By Islamic "theology" I do not strictly intend the science called *kalam*, but rather broad reflections on the nature of God. Cf. Tim Winter. "Introduction." *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, edited by Tim Winter (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–16.

influential and can contribute to Christian-Muslim dialogue.[704] Theologians have come to embrace Moltmann's perspective in post-Shoah theology in liberationist, radical, Barthian and, panentheistic circles. For the part of the *maqtal* authors, this dissertation has shown that there is a substantial difference between "proto-Shīʿite" and "pro-ʿAlid," and that scholars admired by the Sunnī mainstream such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Iṣfahānī, and al-Khwārizmī functionally straddle the assumed gulf between Sunnism and the *maqtal* genre. This line of investigation would shed further light on the place of the texts investigated in this dissertation within their larger theological contexts.

Islamic Correlates beyond the Maqātil

The second line of research that I suggest concerns possible parallels to this project that transcend sectarian lines. There is room in Shīʿism (through Ḥusayn's martyrology) for divine passibility; can Sunnism (which represents 85 to 90% of the contemporary Muslim world) embrace this concept? Chapter IV's excursus suggests that it can, as sectarian identity was fluid in the Abbasid age and that the *maqātil* were important beyond the Twelver context. Recent events have also bolstered the idea of a larger Islamic identity that transcends sectarian lines. For example, the rise of Islamic ecumenism has witnessed the generation of the 2004 Amman Message. This statement, signed by some two hundred top Muslim scholars and clerics, recognizes the coequal authority of the Jaʿfarī school of law (which undergirds Twelverism)

[704] Increasingly there is a *sociological* blending of Sunnism and Shīʿism seen in the institution of marriage. For discussions of "mixed" marriages in Iraq and Lebanon, see Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Iraq: Inter-sect marriage between Sunni and Shia Muslims, including prevalence; treatment of inter-sect spouses and their children by society and authorities, including in Baghdad; state protection available (2016-January 2018)" https://www.refworld.org/docid/5aa916bb7.html; Lara Deeb, "'Till Sect do You Part?' On Sectarianism and Intermarriage in Lebanon" in *Jadaliyya* https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/34552. Consider also the discussion of *balā'* in this dissertation's introduction, a unifying concept for Sunnism and Shīʿism that has direct bearing on suffering and passion.

alongside seven other Sunnī, Shīʿī, Ibāḍī, and Ẓāhirī schools. This event is an important indication of the broader acceptance of Twelver identity within normative Islamic discourse and practice.

Indeed, there are several possible areas for research into other areas of Islamic theology that could shed light on additional instantiations of divine passibility. Four specific concepts with the larger Islamic tradition deserve attention, two liminal heroes and two theological concepts. The first hero is the Prophet himself. In the Sunnī tradition, a useful concept in this regard might be narratives of *ḥuzn al-nabī* ("the sorrows of the Prophet"). In the year 619 Muḥammad experienced a number of devastating setbacks: his first wife (Fāṭima's mother) Khadija died, as did his uncle and guarantor of physical security Abū Ṭālib. Perhaps even more importantly, Qurʾānic revelations ceased—the Prophet was without not just his wife and his protection, but also his God.[705] The suffering of the Prophet during this time can be read as the suffering of a liminal hero *par excellence*. While this narrative does not explicitly involve God in the Prophet's pain, the latter appears to straddle the temporal and the eternal and suffers in his totality. Further research could uncover parallels between Ḥusayn's passion and the Prophet's Year of Sorrow.

In addition to Muḥammad, another Muslim hero can be brought to bear. Traits essential to Ḥusayn's liminality—suffering and patience—are shared by one of Sunnism's most emblematic figures, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Reading Ibn Ḥanbal's tribulation during the inquisition called the *miḥna* through the lens of these traits could uncover parallels between Ḥusayn and Ibn Ḥanbal. The concepts of *balā'* (hardship, scourge) and affectivity in the divine, explored briefly in the dissertation's introduction, are further useful bridges to the wider world of Islamic

[705] Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar ibn Kathīr (d. 1373) provides a concise summary of this year in his *al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 2006).

theology.[706] Further research could uncover possible connections between Islam writ large and the theological vantage point of the late Abbasid *maqātil*.

In addition to *balā'*, there may be room for talking about divine passibility through the concept of *ṣabr*, or longsuffering. According to some traditions, the ninety-ninth of the ninety-nine names of God is al-Ṣabūr, "the patient One."[707] Longsuffering is a virtue often highlighted in the *maqtal* literature and the Islamic tradition in general. Analysis of this virtue, both in holy people and in the divine ontology, could prove fruitful in extending this project further beyond the bounds of Twelverism.

Later Shī'a Developments

A third promising area for future research involves study of *maqtal* texts that were composed after those studied in Chapters IV, V, and VI of this dissertation. The *maqātil* have undergone two literary shifts since the late Abbasid era, one during the Safavid era (1501-1736) and the second in the modern period. Past dismissals of the 'post-classical' age of Islam as an age of 'decadence and decline' have recently been recognized as problematic, and some recent scholarship has highlighted the creativity and innovative nature of some literature and thought from the 'post-classical' era. Indeed, Islam (including its Shīʿa instantiations) flourished during the Safavid era; with it came a resurgence in *maqtal* output.[708]. Future study could compare the doctrine of God communicated in the late Abbasid *maqātil* to those of later "generations" of

[706] Cf. Rouzati, *Trial and Tribulation*, 37f.

[707] Cf. Louis Gardet. "al-Asmāʾ al-Ḥusnā." Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition. ed. P. Bearman *et. al*. Brill Online, 2014. Reference. Georgetown University. 12 May 2014 http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/al-asma-al-husna-COM_0070.

[708] Cf. Thomas Bauer, "In Search of 'Post-Classical Literature': A Review Article," in *Mamluk Studies Review* XI/2 (2007).

martyrologies. Broadly speaking, though does Ḥusayn still balance humanity and divinity in these latter texts, in subtle ways he has morphed in the latter direction. To what extent does his suffering carry the existential weight that it once did? This line of investigation would contribute to understandings of the status of Ḥusayn within historical Shī'ī thought more broadly.

As with Safavid accounts, contemporary *maqātil* are numerous, and below is a list of prominent examples that enjoy a measure of popularity in the Muslim world today. Some of them have been translated from Arabic or Persian into Western languages.

1. *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn wa-Maṣraʿ Ahl Baytihi wa-Aṣḥābihi fī Karbalāʾ* by ps-Abū Mikhnaf.
2. *Al-Imām al-Ḥusayn: Sīra wa-Maqtal* by Muḥammad Hādī.
3. *Maqtal al-Imām al-Ḥusayn (AS)* by Muḥammad Riḍā al-Ṭabasī al-Najafī.
4. The Tale of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussain (a.s.): "The Kerbala Epic" by Seyed Muḥammad Taqī Baḥr al-'Ulūm (trans. Najim al-Khafaji).
5. *Imām Ḥusayn wa-Ghanmāʾim Karbalāʾ* by ʿAlī Naẓarī Munfared (trans. Ali Ebrahimi).
6. *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* by Abd al Razzaq al-Muqarram (trans. Yasin T. Al-Jibouri).
7. *Husayn: The Sacrifice for Mankind* by Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Ḥusaynī Shīrāzī (trans. Ali ibn Adam Z. Olyabek).
8. *Husain: The Saviour of Islam* by S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali.

An initial reading of modern *maqātil* suggests that their depiction of Ḥusayn draws him more in the direction of the cosmic than the human; a parallel might be made to the Jesus of John versus the Jesus of Mark. Further study might reveal whether this shift in the direction of the transcendent removes Ḥusayn from a position of liminality, and if so, what implications this shift has for the concept of divine solidarity with suffering humanity. Such a study could also focus on the ways in which contemporary authors develop these narratives beyond the early *maqātil* and *aḥādīth* on which they are based. As with any popularly received religious hero, Ḥusayn's status has risen over time. Recent Muslim writers have appropriated Washington Irving, who studied Islam, claiming that he saw something otherworldly in Ḥusayn's resistance to Yazīd. This

probably pseudepigraphical reference reflects both a reverence for Ḥusayn and a desire to glorify him through the Western idiom:

> It was possible for Husayn to save his life by submitting himself to the will of Yazid. But his responsibility as a reformer did not allow him to accept Yazid's Caliphate. He therefore prepared to embrace all sorts of discomfort and inconvenience in order to deliver Islam from the hands of the Omayyads. Under the blazing sun, on the parched land and against the stifling heat of Arabia, stood the immortal Husayn.[709]

Contemporary versions of *maqtal al-Ḥusayn* might be expected, because of the time elapsed, to locate Ḥusayn even farther on the divine side of the human-divine divide. On the whole, in fact, they do. A genre that started as hagiographical history has morphed into historical hagiography. Miracles are more plentiful, coincidences are more common, and Ḥusayn's already immaculate personality is even more so. His anxiety in early *maqātil* yields to resolve as the tradition develops. Yazīd, who in early texts (and presumably in history) was torn over what to do about Ḥusayn, becomes an archvillain, completely reprobate. Ḥusayn's death becomes explicitly redemptive and salvific. None of this is surprising; legends tend to grow as they develop. Difficult details also tend to become smoothed over as stories are passed through the generations. For the *maqātil*, this is most clearly seen in three places: Ḥusayn's involvement in the battle, the role of his partisans therein, and writers intentionally drawing a parallel between him and Jesus.

Three shifts are evident in the turn to contemporary *maqātil*. First, Ḥusayn becomes more active in the fighting. The early texts tend to place him in the rear throughout much of the battle; he prays, reads from the Qurʾān, and consoles the women. Contemporary accounts transform him into a mighty warrior, like Samson or David, who charges valiantly into the fray and slaughters

[709] While this may be apocryphal, it is of note that contemporary Shīʻites have, like Gandhi, appropriated Irving for lauding Ḥusayn's sacrifice.

Yazīd's forces with superhuman strength. This was not always the dominant view of his station. In the la

Second, Ḥusayn shoulders much more of the events' weight alone. He implores family and friends to flee the impending battle, and when they refuse to leave him he comforts them in superhuman ways. Third, recent versions challenge the parallels between Ḥusayn and Christ. While older accounts had implicitly celebrated the Christian version of the passion story, newer ones weave in anti-Christian polemics. Contemporary *maqātil* go to great lengths to show that Christianity, like Sunnī Islam, is a depraved religion built on faulty premises. Ḥusayn thus shifts from a sectarian patriarch to a universal hero. These three developments are not ubiquitous—contemporary accounts are remarkably diverse—but given that they represent a general trend evident in these texts, it would be interesting to learn more, through future research, about the ways in which these *maqātil* reflect the current state of Shī'ī piety and thought.

Incorporating Islam into Moltmannian Thought

The final direction for future study that I suggest, based on the findings of this project, concerns the ways in which Moltmannian thought might be able to take Islam into account more fully. Moltmann's œuvre has taken little account of the depths of Islamic thought, especially its doctrine of God. In addition to the criticisms of his patripassianism mentioned above, Moltmann's view of the Christ event as a singularity stands as a challenge to using his thought as a bridge for interreligious theology. Indeed, some Barthians have been more hesitant to acknowledge the possibility of interreligious *theological* dialogue than many of their contemporaries, as the Christ event as they read it is entirely singular. Many in the "neo-orthodox" or "postliberal" schools would note that Wittgenstein's cultural-linguistic influence cannot be understated at this point—Christians do not speak the same cultural language as

Muslims. Additionally, the Christological implications of the Christocentric conclusion to the "Christ Hymn" in Philippians—that every tongue will "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"—cannot be overlooked.[710] To put it simply, many of Moltmann's adherents would have difficulty accepting the premise that God's action can be seen—and inner life known—through the traditions of non-Christian communities. Yet Barth's distinction between religion (*Religion*) and belief (*Glaube*) presents a potential resolution to this exclusivist reading, and Moltmann's existential relationship with Judaism furthers this challenge.[711] I would argue that Moltmann's seeming exclusivist theology, one that rests the salvation of the world squarely on the shoulders of the crucified-yet-resurrected Christ, is in fact broader than it appears at first glance. If Moltmann's point of departure is, as I contended in Chapter III, Wiesel's epiphany of God's suffering in the body of a Jewish boy in Auschwitz, then the Christ event has clear echoes in human history not only *within* but also *beyond* the Church. Moltmann is prepared to admit that Abraham Heschel understands "God" to a degree that Scholastic Christians (and the Judaisms of Jehuda Halevi, Moses Maimonides, and Baruch Spinoza) never did; therefore Trinitarianism is not the ultimate prerequisite for authentic theology. Perhaps the next step in a developed Moltmannian ethos is the incorporation of Islam into its doctrine of God; this dissertation is a contribution to this project. Future steps in this direction would lead to a broader reading of Islam through a Moltmannian lens, a fecund field of research.

[710] Philippians 2:11 NRSV

[711] Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I.2 and IV.1.

Concluding Remarks

This dissertation contends that God can be known through the experiential phenomena related to liminality when approached from a hermeneutic of theology from below in both Christianity and Islam. The idea of liminality, when understood not merely as a moment in time but rather as a perpetual state that some characters hold, is a productive framework through which to understand the role of the suffering Ḥusayn—this suffering reverberates through his community and through the cosmos. Suggesting that the liminal moment can be "permanentized" opens space for a theology of a hero who forever embodies a liminal position. This suffering takes on an important role in the collective memory and thought of the communities who live by these *maqtal* texts.

Returning from the Sunnī and contemporary Shīʿa worlds to 12th century nascent Twelverism, we simultaneously return to Moltmann's challenge. This dissertation set out to address this question: Can it be said that the divine is passible in the narrative theology undergirding *maqātil al-Ḥusayn*? The answer must be a nuanced affirmation. The late Abbasid *maqtal* writers would not have conceived of a crucified (or beheaded) God, but they do acknowledge that the temporal event of Ḥusayn's slaying rippled cosmically and reached all the way to the Throne. Passibility is a narrative-driven hermeneutic, when read "from below," through which the drama of Ḥusayn's passion comes to the fore. A God who is present, immanent, and capable of passions such as love, wrath, and sorrow, emerges from between the lines of these martyrologies. Anastasia Scrutton anticipates the future of the passibility conversation:

> [F]uture directions for the impassibility debate might include building on the interface between the passibility debate and philosophy of emotion. This could involve developing, through reflection on experience, more sophisticated understandings of empathy, compassion, sympathy and related phenomena, of the relationship between emotions and

> cognitive states that are traditionally seen as non-emotional (e.g. thoughts, beliefs, judgements) and of love.[712]

Passibility, as I have suggested, transcends individual religious traditions. The horizons of the Christian and Muslim texts I have discussed approach each other, allowing for mutual understanding and a productive conversation with regard to a central theological idea, that of divine passibility. This *Horizontverschmelzung* allows for the type of mutual understanding that forms a basis for Christian-Muslim dialogue.

[712] Scrutton, "Divine Passibility," 873.

Appendix: Key Figures in the ʿĀshūrāʾ Drama

Umayyad Camp

Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiya – The sixth Sunnī Caliph who reigned from Damascus

ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād – Governor of Kūfa whose appointment was contingent on obeying Yazīd's orders to secure Ḥusayn's fealty

ʿUmar ibn Saʿd – Deputy of ibn Ziyad who led the Umayyad forces at Karbalāʾ after failing to negotiate a nonviolent resolution

Shamir/Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan – Officer in ibn Saʿd's army who persuaded ibn Ziyād to fight Ḥusayn and ultimately ordered Ḥusayn's execution

† al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Tamīmī – General of ibn Ziyād's army who defected and died fighting for Ḥusayn; greatly venerated in Shīʿī Islam for his willingness to put conscience before duty and safety

ʿAlid Camp

† Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib – The second son of ʿAlī and Fāṭima who was in Mecca when he received letters from ~30,000 Kūfans requesting his leadership

† Muslim ibn ʿAqīl – Ḥusayn's messenger who ibn Ziyād executed for failing to swear allegiance

† Hānī ibn ʿUrwa – Octogenarian executed in the public square for harboring Muslim ibn ʿAqīl and refusing to turn him over to ibn Ziyād

† al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib – Ḥusayn's half-brother who was shot to death at Karbalāʾ while trying to secure water for Ḥusayn and the women and children of the camp; famously fell before letting Ḥusayn's standard fall, an act that is especially revered in Pakistan and India

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zubayr – Nephew of the Prophet and grandson of Abū Bakr who advised Ḥusayn to fight Yazīd's forces in Mecca rather than going to Kūfa; Ibn Zubayr later rebelled against the Umayyads and set up a short-lived caliphate in Mecca

† Zuhayr ibn Qayn – Commander of Ḥusayn's Companions at Karbalāʾ

Zaynab bint ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib – Ḥusayn's sister who was taken captive at Karbalāʾ and whose sons died there

Sukayna bint Ḥusayn (Fāṭima al-Kubrā) – Ordered al-ʿAbbās to fetch water at Karbalāʾ and supposedly initiated the Shīʿī mourning rituals (including elegies, lamentations, and dramatic poems)

ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn (Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn) – The fourth Shīʿa Imām who was present at Karbalāʾ but too ill to fight; he was the only male in Ḥusayn's camp to be taken captive rather than killed in battle

† ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ḥusayn (ʿAlī al-Aṣghar) – Infant son of Ḥusayn shot in the throat with a three-headed arrow while Ḥusayn held him up in a plea for clemency

† ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn (ʿAlī al-Akbar) Ḥusayn's 18-year-old son who died in battle, causing particular grief to Ḥusayn and his female relatives

† al-Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan – Nephew of Ḥusayn who married Ḥusayn's daughter Sakīna on the 7th of Muḥarram; died fighting heroically at Karbalāʾ

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